

The Animation Fan's Magazine

Karl Cohen Reveals Animated Images the Networks Won't Let You See



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Summer Movie Reviews • Gumby Stars In A Feature
Computer Animated Monsters Battle The Power Rangers
Pocahontas' Directors Talk About Disney's Latest Feature

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ANIMATO!

The Animation Fan's Magazine

Publisher-torial

Here we go again! More noise from citizens concerned about cartoons having a negative impact on the tender minds of youngsters. America still believes anything animated is the sole province of children. Cartoons are easy targets for politicians and cause-of-the-month groups who want to appear concerned and involved with young peoples' well being.

Usually their real concern is finding a cause that will generate publicity, cash and suitable moral outrage.

Except when it comes down to actually raising children, everyone is ready to pitch in with theories, reasons and causes.

If Johnny does poorly in school, it must be the system. Can't be the parents. If Johnny is rude and obnoxious, it must be MTV! Can't be the parents. If Johnny sets fire to the house, it must be a cartoon's influence. Can't be the parents.

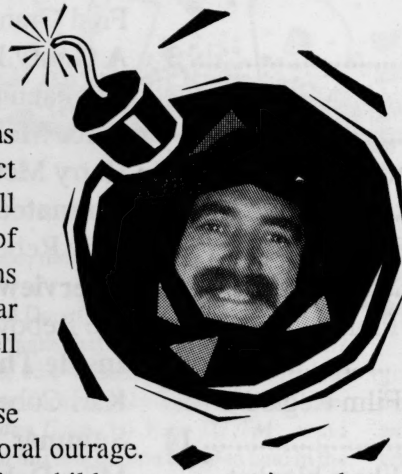
A posting on America On-Line caught my eye last week. A young mother was outraged because *Space Ghost Coast to Coast* exposed her 4-year-old child to guest Timothy Leary. Someone else posted a logical question: What was a 4-year-old doing up that late at night? To me, the scariest network on television is CNN. Yet, everyone is monitoring the Cartoon Network.

When I was seven-years-old I knew that if you really dropped an anvil on someone's head, it would probably kill them. Is this current generation of young people so different they don't know a cartoon is just a cartoon? I don't think so.

Volumes have been written on the influence of electronic media in today's society. So let's cut to the chase. Television isn't supposed to be America's baby sitter.

While I'm in a ranting mood I have one more thing to get off my chest. We received a letter disparaging us for publishing the piece on Vanessa Coffey. ("After what she did to John Kricfalusi!") We didn't print the letter because it had an obviously phony name and address. Let's get something straight. This magazine is dedicated to animation fans. Period. We have no axes to grind. No hidden agendas. What you see is what you get. I met John Kricfalusi last year in Boston. He's talented, educated and engaging. John did the cover for Animato! #16. I like him. I like his work. But to suggest we avoid interviewing a successful executive at Nickelodeon because of past difficulties with John is ludicrous.

If we tried to make everybody happy we wouldn't be Animato! We will withhold your name if asked, but you've got to send your real name and address to get a letter printed. We'll even put your name into a random drawing for Animato! T-shirts just for sending a letter or postcard or E-mail. Write tonight!



-Patrick

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ANIMATO! is not associated with any animation art gallery or studio. This is an independent publication serving the interests of animation fans and professionals.

About the Cover...

All of our favorite characters doing exactly what they're not allowed to do! And kids, don't try anything of this at home! The cover illustration is a collaboration between publisher Patrick Duquette who did the original pencil sketch and illustrator and designer Ray Dorow II

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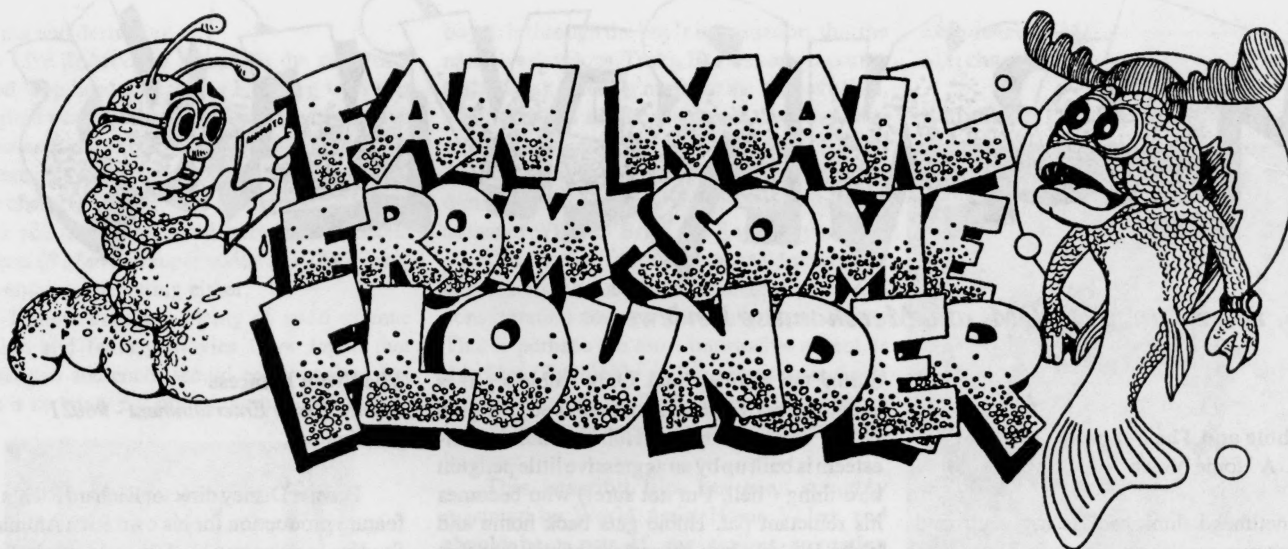
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and Popeye (right) Ain't Misbehavin' on Page 32.



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Film Poll Comments

Christopher E. Barat
Colonial Heights, VA

No doubt, this column will be chock-full of letters commenting on the results of the latest film poll. Here are my own observations:

1. As a "Disney Afternoon" partisan, I was generally pleased at the performances of the various Disney TV series, with the exception of *Gummi Bears*' disappearance from the Top 40 (how soon they forget). Most surprising of all was the performance of *Tale Spin*. At #6, *Tale Spin* became the first DTV series to rank ahead of *DuckTales*. This is more than passing strange, since *TS* has never generated the intense adoration among DTV fans that has accrued to several of the other series, such as *DuckTales*, *Darkwing Duck*, and *Rescue Rangers*. Very few praise it to the skies (pun intended), but very few denigrate it, either. Everyone just sort of likes it. Apparently, *TS* is the most consistently appreciated of the DTV series. DTV may have made a mistake when they ceased production of it after just one season.

2. I thought that nothing short of a shift in the cosmic balance would be enough to knock *The Bullwinkle Show* out of its #1 series slot. *The Simpsons* was as good a choice as any to do so. However, don't forget *DuckTales* smashing success, the quality upgrade in syndicated animation would have taken a very different form. Among other things, Warners TV Animation has its existence to thank *DT* for. Remember those *DT* jokes in *Tiny Toon Adventures*' first season? There was a little respect behind all the joshery.

3. Don't get your knickers in a twist regarding a supposed "lack of great female cartoon characters." There are plenty of them out there. The key is to develop female characters that appeal across gender lines. Babs Bunny and Dot Warner have succeeded in attracting male as well as female fans because of their appealing personalities. No doubt, because of

their success, more such characters are on the way.

4. Did *DuckTales: The Movie's* original characters make that much of an impression? Merlock as #34 Villain, Dijon as #40? (And Dijon even reformed in the last original *DT* tale, "*The Golden Goose*"!) How *DT:TM* could have pulled this feat off and failed to land in the Top 40 Movies is beyond me!

On to other matters. . . You'll probably have a review of *A Goofy Movie* somewhere in #32, but allow me to get in my 2 cents about it. I thought it was great — much better than early reports had indicated it would be. It almost justified the disappointing *Goof Troop*. "The attempts to give Goofy "emotional depth," patronized by some reviewers, could be fully appreciated only by those who had suffered through "GT"s" endless recycling of bland slapstick.

On the question of interviews with voice actors, I cast a vote for an interview with Tress MacNeille. Apologies to June Foray, but she's the best female voice actor I've ever heard.

I do have some bad news to report on the voice-actor front. Longtime voice actor Raymond Owens, best remembered for his work on the popular syndicated series *Kimba the White Lion*, *Astroboy*, and *Gigantor*, passed away in December. I had an opportunity to meet Mr. Owens and his wife on several occasions. They were most kind and gracious, and thrilled that their work was so fondly remembered. I'm sure Raymond would be pleased to know that animation fans still think so highly of *Kimba*, as proven by its strong showing in the Film Poll.

The current "regime" has done a fine job keeping ANIMATO! at the top of the animation-mag heap. Keep up the good work.

Thanks for the kind words. Pat and I are quite elated about the very positive feedback concerning the Film Poll. It's going to be an annual event. GMD

A Request

Kathleen M. Robbins
Winter Park FL

I enjoy reading your magazine. It would be great if you included more about 1980's cartoons, such as *G.I. Joe*, *D&D*, *Jem*, *MASK*, and *Voltron*, and the attempt to collect animation art from these series. Also, I really like all the articles about cartoon voice actors; great article about Don Messick!

Rescuers Forever!

Stanley Levon McMullen
Port Deposit Maryland

I am 54 years old and have been an animation buff all my life. I have saved all my issues of your magazine since issue number one. I just received issue 31 and you keep getting better and better with each new issue. My two favorite animated characters are Bernard and Miss Bianca, the stars of *The Rescuers* and *The Rescuers Down Under*.

I think *The Rescuers Down Under* was the neatest animation cartoon feature to ever come out of Disney. If the Disney big shots had given Bernard and Miss Bianca strong merchandising campaigns like they did for *Roger Rabbit* the most unDisney looking Disney character I've ever seen to make it big. Bernard and Miss Bianca are animation's best known mice. And who could have sold more products than Miss Bianca's voiceover, Eva Gabor, who is a dead ringer for Miss Bianca. I'd like to see these two mice in a television series called *The Rescuers* on a daily basis with a famous voice, Disney villain or villainess in every plot with a cliffhanger everyday with the conclusion on Friday. Or a Bernard and Miss Bianca featurette in *Fantasia II*, like the first *Fantasia* did with Mickey Mouse, with The Mice of The Rescue Aid Society serving as the orchestra boasting Bernard and Miss Bianca's popularity, making them a household word like Mickey and Minnie

Continued on Page 69

TOON REVIEWS

Video, Television, CD ROM, and Merchandise Reviews

Video

The Pebble and The Penguin MGM/UA Home Video

Sometimes I think back to my youth and the Superman comics of the early Sixties. At that time, the writers of the title obviously didn't know what to do with old Supes, and their work went in some odd directions.

One of the best and oddest conventions was Bizarro World. This is a planet (shaped as a cube, not as ball) in which almost everything is opposite our world. On Bizarro World, everyone is Superman, ugliness is celebrated as beauty, stupidity is honored over genius, etc.

What does this have to do with *The Pebble and The Penguin*? Well, I realized after watching Don Bluth's new film that he is indeed the Bizarro World Walt Disney? Cute characters, no! Ugly characters, yes! Funny cartoon gags, no! Stale stuff stolen from other films? Yes!

What is particularly disturbing about this film isn't what it *lacks*, but what it *has*. *The Pebble and The Penguin* is nicely animated, and, in fact, can boast of some very impressive sequences. It has a very respectable voice cast. It has a name brand composer in the form of Barry Manilow. It was given a wide theatrical release and more promotion than many other films, animated or not.

On these factors alone, one would assume the film should at least be enduring. But I'm afraid that it is running a neck and neck race with *A Troll in Central Park* for the absolute low point of Don Bluth's career. *Pebble* hasn't got a single laugh in the entire picture. Its story is no more than an aged all-purpose the worm-turns-and-win-the-girl plot. Only the youngest of audiences could sit through this awful film without popping that fast forward button a few times.

Sorry Don, but without a story you don't have a movie. Granted you do have more story in this film than in *Rock-a-Doodle*. *Pebble* is a straight-forward narrative relatively unencumbered with flashbacks, dream sequences and alternative realities. But Don, donja you need a few jokes?

Our story? Hubie the nerd penguin needs to give his lady love a pebble to express his love

during the mating ritual. Only Hubie's girl is sought after by the evil (and pumped) penguin Drake who gets rid of Hubie. Hubie's self-esteem is built up by an aggressive little penguin bird-thing (hell, I'm not sure!) who becomes his reluctant pal. Hubie gets back home and kicks Drake's butt regardless of the fact that Drake resembles a 10 foot tall bird with the head of a wolf and the pecs of Arnold Schwarzenegger.

The design of the characters is hideous. Really, I don't need to see female penguins with breasts. Martin Short's vocal characterization of Hubie is almost identical to Dom Deluise's Stanley the Troll in *A Troll in Central Park*. Both actors stutter and stammer, and sound like a crossing between Lou Costello and Hugh Herbert. A perfect waste of talent.

Don, I hate to tell you, but 30 year-old Chilly Willy shorts have more invention, humor and heart than your penguin opus. GMD



Mon Dieu! Isn't that John Cleese doing his very bad, but very funny french accent in *The Swan Princess*? Mais, oui! (©1994 Nest productions Inc. All Rights reserved)

The Swan Princess

Turner Home Entertainment - #8021
90 minutes

Former Disney director Richard Rich's first feature production for his own Rich Animation Studios is an enjoyable fairy tale musical with only one fault...it follows the Disney formula too close.

Unlike any of Don Bluth's recent efforts or films such as *Little Nemo*, *The Swan Princess* is a solidly-made movie with high-quality animation, a superior score, a name brand vocal cast who actually get to act, and a decent story. Obviously Rich and his crew set out to make a *Beauty and the Beast*-type film and they succeeded where few have.

That's the problem. With all of the obvious talent and budget, Rich could have tried something more unique. Rich should have taken a page out of the programming guides for the television industry. Don't imitate your competition. Counter-program against them.

This is a film which, like the better Disney efforts, the whole family can enjoy. Unlike Jerry Beck, (see the last issue of *ANIMATO!*) I enjoyed the fact that Jack Palance didn't just recite his lines as the evil wizard in his "own" voice. Jack was acting, and it was just fine! The same thing with John Cleese. His John-Bob the Frog had that wonderfully fake French accent Cleese used during his *Monty Python* Days. Having good actors such as these two and not letting them have some fun creating a characterization would be a shame!

If you missed this film in the theaters, be sure you see it on video. GMD

8 Man

Orion Home Video - MOP6002

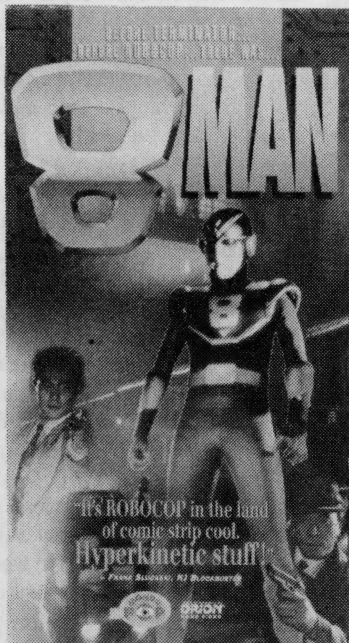
The classic Japanese animated series is given the live-action treatment, and then the dubbed-into-English treatment in this 1992 film recently brought to American video through the auspices of Streamline Pictures.

A great effort is made by the video folks to convince people that *8 Man* preceded other cyborg heroes such as *Robocop*, and that is of course true. But no amount of explanation can overcome the simple fact that this film is lifeless,

boring and derivative.

Like *Robocop*, *8 Man* tells the story of a good cop brought back as a cyborg with this original memory erased and used by the police force as a superhero. Unlike *Robocop*, there is no extreme violence in this production, not wit, nor characterization. The actors walk through their roles, and appeared bored. The special effects (*8 Man* has super speed a la *The Flash*) are nothing interesting either.

I know there are plenty of good science fiction and fantasy movies from Japan that American audiences would enjoy seeing, but this is certainly not one of them. GMD



The Emperor's Nightingale

World Artist's Home Video - VWAI 100
for ordering information: 1-800-821-1205

The great Czech puppet animator Jiri Trnka may not be a figure well known to many contemporary American animation fans, but he should be, and thanks to Rembrandt Films, one of Trnka's feature films is now available on home video.

Trnka, trained as an illustrator and painter, had a great love of puppetry. In his native Czechoslovakia, puppet theaters tackled subjects which ranged from children's stories to political satire to the classic drama. Intrigued by the potential of animation, Trnka's first film was a cartoon. His dissatisfaction with the results of that production and a following film, led Trnka to animate puppets, an animation medium he could fully control. *The Emperor's Nightingale* is an adaptation of the Hans Christian Andersen story, and was second feature, and produced by Trnka in 1948. It released in this country in 1951 with Boris Karloff acting as the film's narrator.

Trnka links the fairy tale with a prologue telling the story of a pampered but very lonely

boy. It is through the boy's imagination, that the narrative develops. Trnka, like his contemporary George Pal, cared far more for the look of a film, and the affect of the design on the story than attempting to make an animated creation seem "real." Trnka's and Pal's approach to three-dimensional animation was the exact opposite to that of Willis O'Brien and Ray Harryhausen.

Despite that Trnka's figures seldom change expression, the animator manages to evoke consideration emotion from his puppet actors. That is perhaps the most impressive aspect of this film. The highly stylized puppets and sets convey the emotions Trnka wants his audiences to feel. Trnka understands that less can definitely be more.

This beautiful film has been superbly mastered by World Artist Home Video, and should be a part of any serious animation collection. GMD

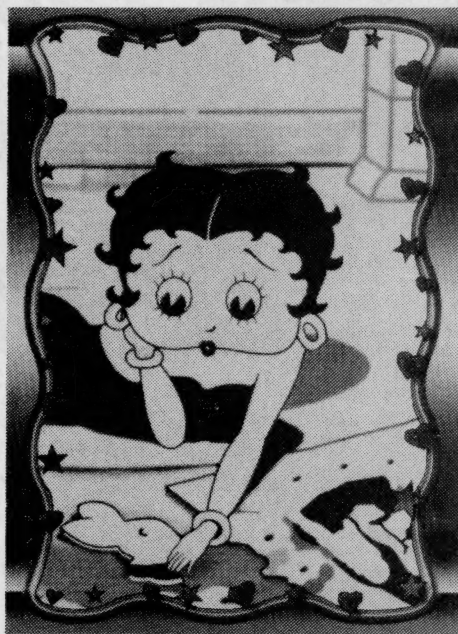


Three Ages Kino On Video

This remarkable tape is one of a definitive series of Buster Keaton's silent film features from Kino, and should be in every serious video library. Although Keaton had starred in a feature version of the Broadway hit *The Saphead*, *Three Ages* is considered really to be his first feature. A very funny lampoon of D.W. Griffith's *Intolerance*, *Three Ages* tells a love story in caveman days, the time of the Roman Empire and (then) present day America. Why is a classic silent comedy being reviewed in ANIMATO!? Because, there is a short but very well done sequence in which caveman Buster rides his pet dinosaur that was accomplished with clay animation. And besides that, any animation must be a film fan in some way, and Keaton should be part of every movie enthusiast's film

experience! GMD
Merchandise

Betty Boop Trading Cards: Series One



Krome Productions Inc.

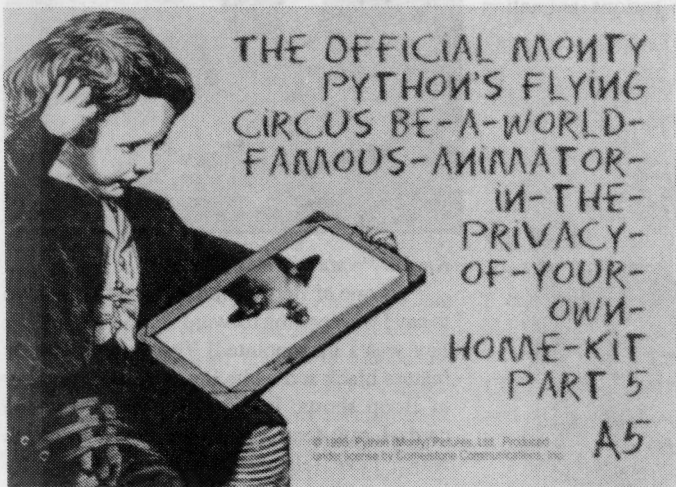
As one of Betty's number one fans, I have to say I was looking forward to this card set, but boy was I disappointed! These cards largely feature black and white images from a number of Boop shorts. Interestingly enough all the cards I saw featured scenes from the shorts which have fallen into public domain. The images are obviously frame enlargements which have then been crudely redrawn. The effect is less than impressive. The few color cards are also re-drawn frame enlargements. Don't get stuck buying a set of these until you see them! GMD

The Adventures of Batman and Robin Trading Cards Skybox

I really liked the first series of cards taken from the successful Fox *Batman* series as the sharp images were clearly taken from cels. I wish I could say the same with this new series, but the somewhat muddy reproduction on the cards I purchased look to me as if the images were captured from a video. The gimmick with this set is actually fun. No, it's not plastic-coated, autographed holograms...it's a pop-up card featured the Caped Crusader and his allies and enemies.

Monty Python's Flying Circus trading cards Cornerstone Communications

Now, this is the most fun I've had with a trading card set since Drew Friedman's *Toxic High School* from Topps. Using photos from



the series and Terry Gilliam's animation art, this set actually reproduces the Python blend of intellectual humor and nasty lunacy, and it can fit into your pocket. Highly recommended.

Television

World Premiere Toons Cartoon Network

Raw Deal in Rome, directed by Eugene Mattos
A Clean Get Away, directed by Meinert Hansen
Rat in a Hot Tin Can; A Perennial Pictures production.
Short Pfuse; directed by Butch Hartman.

While I can't say that the first batch of WPT I saw were uniformly inventive and funny, I can say many of them were trying for something original, and in the formula world of television animation that counts a lot in my book. I wish I could say the same for the four new shorts sent to me by the folks at The Cartoon Network. Although the only stated criteria for the WPT is that they are funny, it seems to me that several shared characteristics are quite evident, but being funny isn't one of them.

First, does every cartoon have to star a comedy team? with the exception of *Raw Deal*

in *Rome*, we've got that suspiciously Hanna-Barbera-esque convention of the comedy team. There's O. Ratz and his friend Dave D. Fly, Captain Buzz Cheeply and his friend Slide the Robot and Scottish cat Chip and his friend a two-legged "land shark" Pfish. Puuleeze!

Secondly, why are these shorts so "high concept?" I mean the *Raw Deal in Rome* short deals with a blue lyre-playing dog in ancient Rome who is pursued while at a performance by a hungry flea. During the course of the short, there are plenty of gags which have nothing to do with ancient Rome. The short's oddness certainly seems forced. Pfish and Chip also made me scratch my head and say "huh?" Why are these two characters together? And what's a land shark?

Technically, all

the shorts creatively use the limitations of their budget, but I didn't see a single laugh in them. GMD

Big Top's Cartoon Toolbox
Starring Felix the Cat
CD-ROM Interactive
\$54.95

How much fun can adult animation fans have with a computer program designed for "ages 7 and up"? Well, actually, lots if you have a little time, lots of RAM and an open mind.

A quick run through the tutorial (5 minutes) and I was ready to create the next *Band Concert*. The interface is very easy to use. Any child can navigate the system after a minimum of instruction. The hardest thing about *Cartoon Toolbox* is figuring out how to open the unique cartoon without ripping the cardboard.

The program contains an impressive library of backdrops, characters, props, special effects and sounds which you can manipulate and edit into a polished package.

My soaring imagination was quickly brought back to earth by program parameters and RAM (memory) limitations. This is not a

criticism of Big Top. All color animation programs inhale RAM. We wanted to test *Toolbox* on a typical Macintosh so we used our studio Performa 575 with 12 megabytes of RAM. The program seems to allocate a certain amount of RAM for a cartoon. At about 2800K I had to start squeezing to complete a segment. This isn't a big deal as it makes you do a tight cartoon with rapid gags and no padding.

Characters and props are beautifully rendered. The artwork evokes the best of Disney and Warners with a twist of Fleischer. All characters and some of the props have their own animated loops; A car that shakes and smokes, a tree that rustles, a windmill blade spins with a shadow. Characters have set loops of "takes" which can be edited into smooth transitions. You can also move Felix and friends and objects by "dragging" with the mouse. Stop motion animation is easy to do with *Toolbox*, if you have the patience.

Music, effects and voices are provided in an easy to use sound library. Timing sound effects is a snap since the cartoon can be jogged one frame at a time. A musical track is only a click away. Same for voice overs. It's fun just sampling the sound files. They even provide those *Ren & Stimpy* style gross-out sounds without obvious labels on the files. The only glitch I noticed surfaced in the sound file. Sometimes the program loaded without sound. Again, no big deal, just reboot.

I assembled three satisfying cartoons and each made me chuckle. Big Top's goal was to create an interactive CD-ROM that would engage young people. (As opposed to a CD that is just passive entertainment.) I certainly got involved with the animation and then I spent time trying to circumvent the program parameters. Don't underestimate the fun factor of this aspect of computing. Even away from the computer, I was thinking of alternatives for dealing with forced perspective and pan shots. The best way to get a person's attention is to tell them "it can't be done!"

I was able to create a seamless vertical pan with a little patience and a cardboard marking strip taped to the side of the monitor. Cool results.

A program override wouldn't let me work in black and white. I wanted to use grayscale to save RAM and to create cartoons in the style of my youth. My guess is the programmers are so proud of their brilliant color, they won't allow pagans to "step back" in time to glorious black and white.

Another great feature is that you can share your creations with friends, even if they only have IBM systems. If your cartoon fits on a 3.5 disk you can export it and run it without the CD-ROM on another computer.

I would love to see a companion program

Continued on Page 71

The Magic of Peter Pan



This latest addition to the Disney Discovery Collection captures Pan's boyish spirit of adventure as it leads the viewer to discover its secrets. Hidden within artist Tom duBois' masterful fantasy scene are 15 secret images, including a specially designed key to unlock the magic! Where are the Lost Boys, Wendy, Michael, John, Captain Hook and the Crocodile? That's for you and Peter Pan to discover together. Order this collectible classic today and let the Magic begin!



Fine Toon Cartoon Art Gallery
2427 Bissonnet
Houston, Texas 77005
713/522-6499 Fax 713/522-6501



Manga Entertainment Announces New Releases

Manga Entertainment will be releasing the following tapes in June:

The Wings of Honneamise, highly praised in the last issue of **ANIMATO!**, is described by the company as a cross between *The Right Stuff* and *An Officer and a Gentleman*. (Dubbed; 124 minutes SRP \$19.95; also available subtitled at \$24.95)

Ninja Scroll is an action-packed saga of deadly conquest and intrigue set against a backdrop of mysticism and terror. (Dubbed; 90 minutes SRP \$19.95; also available subtitled at \$24.95)

Also available in June, *Orguss 02 Vol. 2* and *Giant Robo Vol. 2*. (both Dubbed; 45 minutes SRP \$14.95)

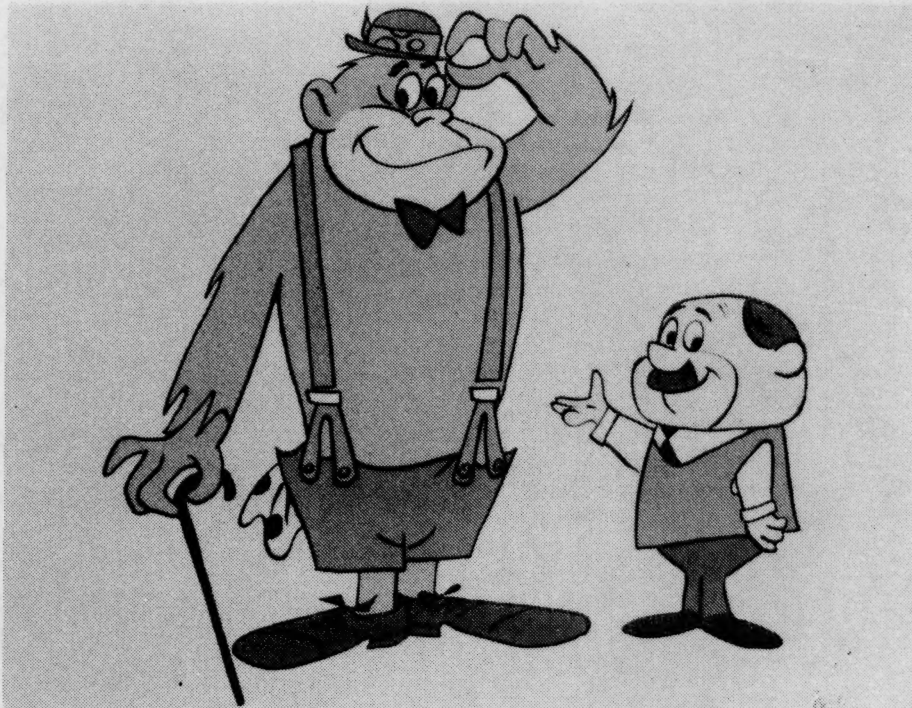
Cinecon '95

Cinecon, the annual convention of the Society for Cinephiles, will be held Labor Day weekend, August 31 through September 4, at the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel in Los Angeles. Cinecon 31 features 35mm screenings of rare silent and sound motion pictures through the 1940's, as well as notable guests from that era (recent past guests have included actors Burgess Meredith and Luise Rainer, director Edward Dmytryk, composer David Raksin, and animator Virgil Ross). This year there will be a special emphasis on animation, including film fragments, Disney rarities, Puppetoons, Fleischer Color Classics, and the premiere screening of the newly-discovered *Toby the Pup* cartoon from the lost series of RKO shorts directed by Dick Huemer.

For more information, write Cinecon, P.O. Box 1632, Hollywood, CA 90028.

ANIMA MUNDI '95

Brazil's Third International Animation Film and Festival Festival, Anima Mundi '95, will be conducted in the Bank of Brazil's Cultural Center in Rio de Janeiro. This non-competitive festival was organized by four Brazilian animators, Marcos Magalhaes, Lea Zaugry, Aida Queiroz and Cesar Coelho. The idea behind the festival to give Brazilian audiences the chance to experience animation from around the world.



Magilla makes it to a museum! (©1992 Hanna-Barbera Productions, Inc. All Rights Reserved.)

This year's special guests are Jan Svankmajer and Frederic Back. For more information, contact Anima Mundi at Av. Prado Junior, 297/604 Copacabana - 22011-040 Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

AnimEigo Boxed Sets

AnimEigo has announced the following new releases in a boxed collector's format:

Oh My Goddess! Collector's Suite - five volumes of the subtitled series in a special box - \$95.00.

Kinagure Orange Road Collector's Suite - five volumes of the subtitled series in a special box - \$120.00

Bubblegun Crisis Collector's Suite - eight volumes of the subtitled series in a special box - \$190.00

Hanna-Barbera Honored

The Museum of Television and Radio, located at 25 West 52nd Street in New York City, highlights the television animation of William Hanna and Joseph Barbera in *The World of Hanna-Barbera* beginning June 23. The Museum pays homage to the animation art of Hanna-Barbera with a gallery display and screenings. The exhibit will feature a collection of original archival artwork from the vaults of the studio including a Jetson prototype storyboard, a Magilla Gorilla pitchboard, the model sheet drawings for Pebbles and Bam Bam and dozens of other artifacts. In conjunction with the gallery display, the daily screenings will showcase a different H-B series bi-weekly that will showcase some of the most memorable cartoon characters in television history. For more information call 121-621-6715.

The following is the schedule of screenings:

July 11 to 23: *Scooby Doo, Where Are You!*/ *Hong Kong Phooey*

July 25 to August 6: *The Banana Splits Adventure Hour*

August 8 to 13: *Cattanooga Cats*

August 15 to 27: *The Perils of Penelope Pitstop*/ *Yogi Bear*

August 29 to September 3: *Josie and the Pussycats*/ *Snagglepuss*/ *Peter Potamus*

September 5 to 10: *Magilla Gorilla*/ *Wacky Races*

September 12 to 24: *Top Cat*/ *Ricochet Rabbit*/ *World Premiere Toons*

More screenings are scheduled through Nov. 17. Call for details.



Central Park Media Announces New Releases

Central Park Media has announced the following new releases: *Cyber City Oedo 808: Data 2* (subtitled; 52 minutes; \$29.95). A member of the Cyber Police has turned traitor and sold confidential police data to a mysterious customer who could stop the Cyber Police forever. But before that can happen, the heroes have 24 hours to uncover the plot. The trail leads to an illegal black market dealing with stolen body parts. Goggles is reunited with his ex-partner-in-crime, and together they find themselves face-to-face with MOLCOS, the military's ultimate killing machine.

Ranma 1/2: Cold Competition (dubbed; 52 minutes; \$24.95). This tape offers two new installments of the popular gender-bender comedy.

Sohryuden: Legend of the Dragon Kings: Volume One (subtitled; 97 minutes; \$29.95). There's something strange about the four Ryudo brothers. Each seems to be endowed with almost superhuman abilities. But someone else there is envious. Kamakura no Gozen, the "old man of

Kamakura" is the richest and most powerful man in Japan. He also seems to know more about the brothers than they know about themselves. He's spent his entire life trying to unravel a secret so important, so powerful, that it is worth any price. And somehow the brothers hold the key to that secret!

Demon Beast Invasion, Volume One (subtitled; 48 minutes; \$29.95). From the creator of *Urotsukidoji* comes this new story of erotic horror. One hundred million years ago, an ecological disaster drove the Demon Beasts from their homeworld. Now they've returned and they're ready to clean up the homestead! Unable to survive in Earth's new environment, they seek human women to mate with in order to create a new breed of Demon Beast who will clear their way for the return of the rest of the brood.

Required Reading

If you love ANIMATO! for its honesty and vitality, and if you're interested in other film genres, the check out the following magazines bearing the ANIMATO! Seal of Approval:

Video Watchdog (\$5.50; PO Box 5283, Cincinnati, OH, 45205-0283). Tim and Donna Lucas' bimonthly publication is a joy to all who love fantastic films on video. Great reviews (which until recently included animation reviews by ANIMATO's editor), incredibly researched articles, and the type of anal retentive examination of the video versions of fantasy films that you can find no where else.

European Trash Cinema (\$6.00; Craig Ledbetter, PO Box 5367, Kingwood, TX, 77325). Hey, if you think that all films from Europe are artistic, intelligent and directed by people such as Bergman and Fellini, wait until you get a copy of Craig's great publication. Horror, crime and spaghetti westerns are just a few of the genres from Europe that are explored with authority and good humor.

Psychotronic Video (\$4.00, Michael Weldon, 3309 Rt. 97 Narrowsburg, NY 12764-6126). In every issue, Michael astounds me with interviews with some of the most amazing interviews featuring the most fascinating performers, directors and producers of low-budget, genre and exploitation cinema. Where else can you read conversations with folks such as Sid Haig, David Carradine, Bruce Glover, Jack Hill and many, many more. This magazine is the godfather of nearly all of current fanzines which cover exploitation cinema.

Factsheet Five (\$6.00; Factsheet Five Subscriptions; PO Box 170099, San Francisco, CA, 94117-0099). This is the guide to the fanzine and small press world. Magazines, comic books, recordings, and books are reviewed with wit and knowledge. A must read!

She (\$3.50 Draculina Publishing, PO Box

969, Centralia, IL 62801) *She* describes itself as "The Magazine of Femme Fatale Cinema," and it's a hoot! Funny, informative and just a little naughty! Amazingly enough, this magazine is not exploitive, although it is for mature readers. The primary focus is on Hong Kong actresses, and editor Cameron Scholes knows his stuff.

New World Premiere Toons

O. Ratz in *Rat in a Hot Tin Can*; July 2, 7:00 p.m. Trying to stay warm in the middle of winter can be a full-time job, especially for sophisticated O. ratz and his friend Dave D. Fly. A Perennial Pictures production.

Pfish and Chip in *Short Pfuse*; July 9; 7:00 p.m. After beginning his career with Walt Disney production as an intern, industry veteran Butch Hartman worked in character design for both Ruby-Spears Enterprises, Inc. and Hanna-Barbera Productions on a variety of shows. In his new short, Pfish, a land shark, and Chip, a Scottish tabby cat, have the misfortune of working on a bomb squad the day the "Mad Bomber" strikes.

Fat Cats in *Drip Dry Drips*; July 16, 7:00 p.m. Louie and Elmo two down-on-their-luck fat cats, undertake their latest get-rich-quick scheme...cleaning the President's new suit. Directed by Jon McClenahan.

George and Junior in *George and Junior Christmas Spectacular*, July 23, 7:00. Pat Ventura's version of Tex Avery's characters return for a second cartoon.

Yoink! of the Yukon, July 30,, 7:00 p.m. When the Mounties lose their pants to Noof, a uniform-grabbing grizzly, they send for Yoink of the Yukon, an impressive dog with an equally impress (long) nose for trouble. Jerry Eisenberg, Don Jurwich and Jim Ryan are the creators.

Yuckie Duck in *I'm On My Way*, August 6, 7:00 p.m. Pat Ventura's second Yuckie Duck short.

New Ren and Stimpy Video

Sony Wonder will be releasing a new Ren and Stimpy collection entitled *As Stinky As They Wanna Be* (SRP \$14.98) in August. The tape features *The Lair of the Lummoxx*, *Dogwater*, *Chicken in a Drawer* and *Farmhands*.



© 1995 Nickelodeon

CURIOSITY SHOP:

SAN FRANCISCO JOURNAL

by Harry McCracken

(We interrupt our usual discussion of obscure animation of the past for a special edition of *Curiosity Shop* — read on to discover why.)

March 28th:

I get a call from the editor in chief of the magazine where I work, asking if I'd be interested in temporarily relocating to San Francisco for a special assignment. The idea sounds like fun, so I agree and start packing.

April 1st:

I get a call from another editor in chief — ANIMATO!'s Mike Dobbs — to discuss my next *Curiosity Shop* column. I tell Mike about my San Francisco trip, and explain that I'll be away from my film collection, which usually provides the fodder for my contributions. We decide that I'll write a special column covering my animation-related adventures in San Francisco.

April 13th:

I've been in San Francisco for a day, and I have my first cartoon-related experience: I happen across an animation art gallery while walking to my hotel. I peer in the window and see that its walls are filled with limited-edition cels from Disney, Warner Bros., and other studios. Call me jaded, but I don't bother to go in. I really only interested in the most limited-edition animation artwork of all: Real production drawings and cels from vintage films. (I also don't feel any urge to explore another store I pass by that's devoted to — shudder! — Hello Kitty merchandise.)

April 15th:

I move into an apartment on Telegraph Hill, and go out exploring in my new neighborhood. Soon, I come across an animation-related store that actually looks worth visiting: Bettie (sic) Boop's, a cozy little place that specializes in Betty Boop products, including an incredible range of T-shirts. When I go in, I discover that there aren't really quite enough Betty products to stock an entire shop: It also carries Popeye merchandise and other cartoon-related items. It's an interesting alternative to such mass-market cartoon retailers as the Disney Store and Warner Bros. Studio Store.

Next, I pass by the Alhambra, an inviting-looking movie theater with a vintage neon sign. It's showing Disney's *A Goofy Movie*, which I wasn't planning on seeing — but the old-fashioned theater lures me in.

The Alhambra turns out to be a classic

movie palace in remarkably well-preserved shape, but *A Goofy Movie* is only so-so at best. In both spirit and visuals, it's very close to the studio's animated television series (including Goofy's own Goof Troop), which means that it's a cut above most TV fare, but hardly as slick or engaging as a top-of-the-line Disney theatrical feature such as *Beauty and the Beast*. (Nor will it age as well: It's chock-full of 1990s references that will probably look quaint in ten or twenty years.)

Another problem is that it's a remarkably serious film that involves Goofy's sometimes rocky relationship with his adolescent son, Max. The two go on a camping trip, and spend much of it squabbling or barely speaking to each other — and Goofy has some melodramatic scenes in which he's shown being bewildered and unhappy with this situation. Now, the Goof is a great comedian, and the film does have a few funny slapstick sequences, along with serviceable musical numbers. But it's hard to take him seriously as a dramatic actor.

Back at my apartment, I idly look at a brochure for *Spike & Mike's Festival of Animation* which I picked up earlier in the day. I discover that the festival is showing in about an hour — and that June Foray will be making a special appearance at this particular screening. Naturally, I immediately hurry out the door and across town to the show.

The Festival features a bunch of good independent films (including all of 1994's Oscar nominees); I particularly like Debra Solomon's *Mrs. Matisse*, in which the title character performs a sort of rap as she wanders in and out of her husband's paintings, and *Sleepy Guy*, a painfully funny computer-generated cartoon that's a combination love story/nightmare. Before the screenings, Ms. Foray speaks about her career, performs many of her voices, and fields questions from the audience, the first of which is, "Were Rocky and Bullwinkle lovers?" Lapsing into her Natasha voice, she responds, "Only in San Francisco would I get such a question, dahlink." Her current project, she reports, was performing the voice of Granny for the new *Tweety and Sylvester Mysteries* TV series that will premiere in the fall.

April 25th

During a visit to Fishermen's Wharf, I take a ride on Dino Island, a simulator attraction that combines a computer-animated film with seats that rock back and forth to create a virtual reality-like sensation. This ride is worth mentioning in Animato mainly because its

creator is Iwerks Entertainment, a theme-park technology company which was apparently founded by Ub Iwerks' son. The company specializes in simulator rides, along the lines of Disneyland's *Star Tours* and Universal Studios' *Back to the Future*.

Dino Island isn't the best simulator attraction I've experienced (and it's certainly a bald-faced rip-off of *Jurassic Park*), but it's enjoyable, and the computer animation is first rate. No doubt Ub would be pleased by what his family is doing with animation, technology, and entertainment these days, and it's nifty to see one of the great names of animation history back in the spotlight.

April 30th

I go to the San Francisco International Film Festival, where I see a screening of *Frank and Ollie*, a new documentary about Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston, two of the legendary Nine Old Men of Disney animation. Directed by Theodore Thomas — Frank's son — and released by Disney, the film is generally excellent — indeed, one of the best films about animation that I've ever seen.

Thomas and Johnston have been soulmates, co-workers, and neighbors for decades, and this film chronicles their work and friendship in a way that's fascinating and sometimes very funny. The younger Thomas does an ingenious job of weaving interviews with the two artists (who are both remarkably eloquent about their art) with film clips, drawings, vintage film clips, and commentary by historians John Canemaker and John Culhane. It's much closer in spirit to the scholarly, serious tone of Frank and Ollie's fine books than to the light and fluffy TV specials that Disney usually produces about its animated films.

As marvelous as *Frank and Ollie* is, it does hold a few disappointments. Most important, the film contains not one mention of the 1941 strike that had such a profound effect on the Disney studio. (The film attributes the studio's rocky fortunes in the early 1940s entirely to World War II.) It also would have benefited from some interviews with Frank and Ollie's contemporaries; while the number of such artists is sadly small and shrinking, there are some left.

This column only covers the first few weeks of a three-month San Francisco stay, but Harry plans to return to his usual focus on obscure cartoons next issue. Know of any weird and wonderful animated films he should cover in this column? Write him c/o ANIMATO!.



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Animation Preservation Report

By Jere Guldin

In 1989, the Library of Congress announced the first selection of twenty-five films to be placed on the National Film Registry. Established by Congress the previous year "to recognize American films that are culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant," the National Film Registry has had an additional twenty-five titles placed on it each successive year, for a total one hundred and fifty films to date. These encompass silent and sound motion pictures, features and shorts, fiction films, documentaries and experimental works.

Who decides the films to be placed on the registry? The ultimate decision comes from the Library of Congress, who accepts a yearly recommendation of titles from the National Film Preservation Board. This panel of educators, scholars and filmmakers from across the country convenes during the summer months to sift through public nominations of titles (check out the sidebar article for information on how you can nominate films to the registry), hash out the twenty-five to make the grade for that year, and submit their recommendations to the Librarian, who can accept or reject those recommendations, and replace some or all with titles of his own. The approved final list is announced in autumn of each year.

There are restrictions as to what can be placed on the registry, and these are adhered to by the Board when making its recommendations. First, no foreign films are allowed, which explains the absence of Fellinis, Kurosawas and the like. Also, none can have been produced and released during the preceding decade, so *Schindler's List* and *Forrest Gump* won't turn up on the registry until well after the turn of the century. Since they must be culturally, historically and aesthetically significant, as well, the films of Ed Wood and John Waters probably won't get considered, not under this Congress, anyway.

You won't see much in the way of animation on the registry, either, at least not currently. Through 1993, just five animated works have been placed on the list. These include the Disney features, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937) and *Fantasia* (1940); the Warner Bros. cartoon, *What's Opera, Doc?* (1957), directed by Chuck Jones; Tex Avery's *Magical Maestro* (1950), for MGM; and the only silent cartoon, Winsor McCay's *Gertie the Dinosaur* (1914). By extension, *King Kong* (1933) and *Star Wars* (1977) might be included for the use of stop-motion animation in their extensive special effects sequences.

In an attempt to rectify the animation slight, when the National Film Preservation Board



Max Fleischer congratulates his star on her entry into the National Film Registry

scheduled a meeting in Los Angeles in July of 1994, UCLA Film and Television Archive was asked to host a program on animation for the Board's members. Animation was one of the areas of film history in which the Board felt it was not well-acquainted (other specific areas, such as independent filmmaking, had been showcased for Board members in the past when they had convened in different cities). Also, there was a general consensus to push for the inclusion of more animated subjects on the registry this time around, rather than the single-title-per-year status afforded the field previously. Few stipulations were made for the screening, other than to ask that it be representational of animation history as a whole; not to include student works, as these are considered for the registry under a different category; to go light on Disney, since the members felt comfortable with their knowledge of that studio's product; and that, if at all possible, Ernest Pintoff's *The Critic* (1963) be included as part of the program, because several members were eager to view it.

So, with only a couple of weeks notice, UCLA commenced putting together the show, doing its best to be as comprehensive as possible by including studio, independent, and experimental work, all in a program with a running time of under two hours. It was decided early on to promote works of important directors at studios whose films already were on the registry, such as MGM and Warners. Also, it was felt that one Disney short must be included, since so many of them were groundbreaking works, and only features had been chosen previously. To give the program some parameters, the beginnings of animation in the silent era would be demonstrated, but there would be no works shown beyond the mid-1970's.

After compiling a preliminary list, with alternates, the UCLA screening committee set about securing prints. As much as possible, 35mm copies were sought, although it was agreed that 16mm would suffice in those instances where 35mm prints of desired titles,

or their alternates, could not be obtained. Many of the films came from the collection of UCLA Film and Television Archive, and the remainder were provided by studios, distributors, and the filmmakers themselves, including Elfriede Fischinger, Faith Hubley, and Ernest Pintoff.

The final program consisted of eighteen short subjects, beginning with J. Stuart Blackton's *Humorous Phases of Funny Faces* (1906), followed by two additional silent films, McCay's *The Sinking of the Lusitania* (1918), and *Felix in Hollywood* (1923), probably the best-known in Pat Sullivan and Otto Messmer's "*Felix the Cat*" series. Then came *Steamboat Willie* (1928), by Disney and Ub Iwerks; the Fleischer version of *Snow White* (1933), with Betty Boop; *Allegretto* (1936), one of Oskar Fischinger's amazing abstract works; Bob Clampett's first great Warner Bros. cartoon, *Porky in Wackyland* (1938); and *Peace on Earth* (1939), Harman-Ising's Academy Award-nominated anti-war subject for MGM.

Following the intermission, practically all of the films presented were either Oscar nominees or winners. Continuing chronologically, these were *Pigs in a Polka* (1943), a Friz Freleng Merrie Melodies cartoon; the "*Puppetoon*" adaptation by George Pal of Dr. Seuss's *And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street* (1944); one of Hanna-Barbera's "*Tom and Jerry*" cartoons, *Two Mouseketeers* (1952); the UPA version of Edgar Allen Poe's *The Tell-Tale Heart* (1953), directed by Ted Parmelee; John and Faith Hubley's wonderfully imaginative *Adventures of an ** (1957); *The Critic*; James Whitney's *Lapis* (1967); and Will Vinton and Bob Gardiner's clay-animated *Closed Mondays* (1974).

The screening was held on the UCLA campus, and was open only to National Film Preservation Board members and other invited guests (afterward, several persons remarked how it was a shame that a program of this caliber could not have been presented to the general public). Elfriede Fischinger, widow of Oskar Fischinger, and Bob Clampett's son, Rob, also were in attendance. The Board certainly seemed to enjoy itself at the screening, laughing heartily at the comic works, *Porky in Wackyland* and *The Critic*, in particular. Unfortunately, there was a disadvantage of having to show some of the films in 16mm, a couple of which were poor condition prints that looked anemic next to the 35mm copies. There was also the additional handicap of the silents being screened at the wrong speed and without any musical accompaniment.

On the plus side, several of the films shown proved revelatory. Much of that feeling was due to the fact that, if any of these pictures is viewed today, usually it's on video, and rarely on a large theater screen. Thus, there was a genuine sense of excitement in seeing anew the war imagery of *Peace on Earth*, the hallucinatory

abstracts of *Allegretto*, the clever and charming transitions from black-and-white to Technicolor of *And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street*, the stark graphics of *The Tell-Tale Heart*, and the sheer exuberance that emanated from the rarely-presented widescreen format *Adventures of an **.

For all of that, only a single new animated title made the registry in 1994. That was Fleischer's *Snow White*, one of the sixteen films screened for the Board. So, although nothing came of the concerted push for animation that was supposed to happen, it is hoped that the presentation at least gave the Board food for thought, opening members' eyes to the wide variety of animated films (on which the screening only touched), and that a better proportion of them might be placed on the registry in the future.

What does having a film placed on the National Film Registry accomplish? One thing it doesn't do is ensure that the film is preserved. The issued statement that "Archival 'best quality' prints of films named to the National Film Registry are preserved at the Library of Congress" is somewhat misleading. This means only that a single copy of the film is housed in the Library's collection, not that it has been

preserved in the sense that new printing elements have been made on the title, from which quality copies can be struck in the future. In fact, the Library has no clout even in securing prints of films on the registry, and can only ask that owners donate a copy, and hope that they comply.

All of the animated films on the registry do exist in 35mm, but not all of them are in the best condition possible. Portions of the original version of *Fantasia* are lost forever, and some of the original negative for it and Disney's *Snow White* were missing when restorations were undertaken in recent years, necessitating an incredibly costly digital clean-up of the latter. The Fleischer *Snow White* is shorn of its original Paramount titles, as these were unceremoniously lopped off from the negative for television distribution purposes in the 1950's.

Even though it doesn't directly ensure the preservation of films named to it, the National Film Registry does call attention to their value by declaring them "national treasures." The inference is, if they were lost, we'd all be the poorer for it. If that idea can be carried across to the remainder of the many films and cartoons facing extinction, maybe some good can come of it.



Interested in finding out more about preserving cartoons? Write ASIFA-Hollywood, Animation Preservation Project, P.O. Box 787, Burbank, CA 91503.

Interested in nominating animated films to the National Film Registry? It's fairly simple to do. Make certain the pictures were produced in the United States, and that they were meant originally for theatrical screenings, not television. They have to be at least ten years old. As for determining if they're culturally, historically, and aesthetically significant... well, that's up to you. (Note that you don't have to prove any of that when making your nominations, but give the matter some preliminary consideration.)

The maximum number of titles a person can nominate per year is fifty. It helps if you can provide year of release, studio, director, etc., just so no one thinks you really meant *To Kill a Mockingbird* when you submit *Tequila Mockingbird*. Be sure to designate the films as animation. It's not compulsory that your nominations be animated films, but, as a reader of *Animato!*, it's a fair guess they would be.

Nominations must be received by March 30 to be considered for the current year; otherwise, they go into the batch of submissions for the following year. Send your nominations to: National Film Registry, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20540.

A Report From Great Britain

Toons 'N' Tea



by Andrew Osmond

Our British correspondent looks at two British animated features you may not have seen, but are widely available on home video in this country.

by Andrew Osmond

A critic once made the point that, while mainstream animation deals with serious themes - good and evil, truth and loyalty, friendship and prejudice - it seldom deals with concrete issues, in the way blockbusters like *Philadelphia* or *In the Name of the Father* do. Of course, there are exceptions. Animations like *Watership Down* and the original *American Tail* have specific messages: Woundwort's warren in the former is a clear relative of Nazi Germany, while the opening of *American Tail* similarly mirrors the Jewish pogroms in Eastern Europe. Nevertheless, such cases are rare, and critics are wont to say this shows the limits of the cartoon: it shows animation is a naive, childish medium that could only trivialise "real" issues.

As a general point, of course, this is nonsense. There are dozens of independent shorts and features which deal with serious subjects as maturely as live-action films: one of them, *Graveyard of the Fireflies*, was covered in the last issue of ANIMATO!. The two films I want to discuss here, however, are interesting because both have credentials that would normally secure a wide audience, and both failed directly because of their subject-matter. Moreover, I think both films deserved much better treatment than they received.

Martin Rosen's *Plague Dogs* is based on Richard Adams' book about two dogs who escape from a research laboratory in England's Lake District and go on the run from humanity. Like the earlier *Watership Down*, (also based on an Adams novel), Rosen's film is an "animal

fantasy": that is, it follows the Disney convention of allowing the animals to talk and have recognizably human personalities. Rowf, voiced by Christopher Benjamin, is the brawn of the two, a tough black labrador wearied by his endless tortures inside the animal lab. Snitter, a terrier, is less strong but more intelligent, and the one responsible for breaking out of the lab in the first place. Unfortunately, Snitter's imagination can be a curse rather than a blessing: thanks to brain surgery, he constantly suffers from nightmare visions and "flies in the head". His voice is provided by well-known character actor John Hurt, who previously played such tormented souls as Caligula, Winston Smith and the Elephant Man. Apart from the dogs, the other key character is "The Tod", voiced by Bernard Hepton, a canny fox a million miles removed from his Disney namesake, who teaches the dogs how to hunt and survive in the wild.

In many ways, *The Plague Dogs* is state-of-the-art. The bleak setting of the winter Lake District is beautifully hand-drawn, the story is powerful and compelling, and the voice-acting from the leads excellent. Yet the film was a miserable failure at the box-office: dubbed by distributors as "*Night and Fog in Disneyland*", it was refused an outlet by its original company Avco-Embassy, and crept into America two years after its London premiere as a United International Picture. Soon after, *The Plague Dogs* faded into total obscurity.

The most obvious reason for its failure was that the film fell between two stools: far too morbid and depressing for children weaned on Disney-style fare, and unlikely to appeal to adults to whom cartoons were solely for kids. *Watership Down*, with its scenes of wanton extermination and dark nightmares, had pushed the medium about as far as it could go in that direction: *Plague Dogs* was neither realist nor allegory, but somewhere uncomfortably in between, bludgeoning its message with

hamfisted narrative devices. For example, the lab at the opening is transformed into an Auschwitz far worse than any single real institution, and the dogs anthropomorphized into eloquent commentators on their situation. In Rosen's defense, both tactics are present in Adams' original (the downbeat ending, incidentally, is not). Nevertheless, the point stands, though it must be said the animals presented by Rosen are hardly Disneyesque: the dogs butcher and kill in order to survive, even eating the corpse of one of their human pursuers when he happens to die near them.

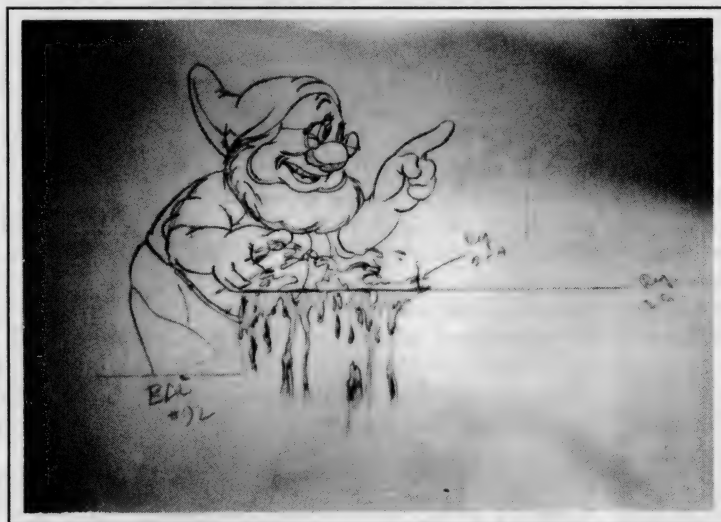
When the *Wind Blows* at least sidesteps the accusation of anthropomorphism, for the simple reason the lead characters (indeed only characters) are human, Jim and Hilda Bloggs, reassuringly dull OAPs living out a comfortably dull retirement. Unfortunately for them, elsewhere submarines are being launched, battlecruisers are on alert....yes, we're in "Strangelove" territory here, but given a rural twist. Jim Bloggs knows all about the Bomb, but also knows how to survive it, having picked up a couple of leaflets in the local library. Determined to Do the Right Thing, he sets about dismantling the house to build a shelter, much to the disapproval of Mrs. Bloggs, who worries what painting the windows white will do to her new curtains. When the balloon goes up, the Bloggs indeed survive, but no-one else does. For the rest of the picture, Mr. Bloggs cheerfully witters on about relief convoys and national revival while staring out at a devastated landscape: even when he and Hilda develop bleeding gums and premature baldness, he refuses to give up hope. ("They'll just shoot us full of pills, Hilda, and we'll be right as rain"). There can only be one end to all this, and for the last ten minutes the audience prays for the picture to stop as the pair degenerate into zombies shambling around on a dead world.

Continued on Page 69

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Book Reviews



Reviewed by Karl Cohen

CARTOONS, ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF CINEMA ANIMATION BY GIANNALBERTO BENDAZZI

Indiana University Press, 601 North Morton Street, Bloomington, Indiana 47404, 540 pages (heavily illustrated in b/w and color), 1994, \$39.95 in paper (\$89.95 in cloth). Credit card orders available by calling 1-800-842-6796.

Giannalberto Bendazzi, an Italian animation historian who is well known for his academic scholarship, has written a remarkable world history of animation. While those of us who live in the USA have access to considerable information about animators and studios in our country, little has been available that covers work done in Asia, Africa, Latin America, Australia, and much of Europe. The importance of this book is that it gives an amazing overview of the history of animation, puts US production in a world-wide perspective, provides some solid biographical information about the men and women who have been working in animation around the world, and it often gives good descriptions of their work.

There is much to be learnt in this book. While schlock art dealers in the US may claim Disney invented animation, Bendazzi traces the history of the animation back to Emile Reynaud's *Theatre Optique*, 1888 and the animated feature back to Quirino Cristiani in Argentina. In 1917 Cristiani released *El Apostol*, an animated film that ran over an hour. It was a criticism of the moral decay of Argentina's political system. In 1929 Cristiani began another political satire. *Peludopolis* was released in 1931 and Bendazzi credits it as the first animated sound feature.

To give some idea of how thorough the book covers the animation of the world the sections on the Soviet Union covers first a dozen or more animators from Russia, and then has several pages on animation from other republics (Ukraine, Belarus, Georgia, Armenia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kirghizistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Moldavia). His coverage of Eastern European animation even includes two pages on work from the rarely

discussed country of Albania.

Bendazzi's coverage of US animation is quite different from the way Charles Solomon and Leonard Maltin have written about it. Bendazzi does not try to cover the same material found in their books. Instead he covers the history of the studios briefly and goes on to discuss independent animation and obscure studios. In his silent chapter there is a half page on Charles Bowers. American avant-garde artists covered from before WWII include Mary Ellen Bute, Douglas Crockwell and Dwinell Grant. Later he discusses the work of Jordan Belson, Harry Smith, Larry Jordan, Hy Hirsch, John and Faith Hubley, Jules Engel, Robert Breer, John & James Whitney, Jane Aaron, Will Vinton, Lou Bunin, Sally Cruikshank and Sara Petty.

While some of the biographies and descriptions of films in the book are extensive, others are brief. For example the information he provides about animation from Liberia is "In this country, which has enjoyed a long tradition of independence, animation was introduced via television. A department of graphic arts, under the leadership of Jefferson Abruzzi Zeon (born in Buchanan, Grand Bassa County, 28 December 1958) operated within the Liberian Broadcasting System. Other than the usual productions for the small screen, Zeon directed several educational and entertainment short films, displaying energy and ambition. His works include *Avoid Accidents*, *The Greedy Magician* (about a voracious man who eventually loses all his food) and *Don't Be Too Anxious* (about the struggle between Giant Rock and the Super Rocks)."

I wish I could say this remarkable book is perfect, but the translation from Italian to English must be criticized. The work was translated for the British market by someone who apparently was not familiar with animation scholarship. At times the text is difficult to understand. It is possible the British translation may make more sense in England than it does to American readers, but in our country the problems with the text are very real.

I asked Bendazzi about these problems and he wrote back "I claim all the blame upon myself, since I read all the proofs line by line and approved them. English is not, unfortunately,

my mother tongue, and I am not up to understanding the subtleties of the prose. On the other hand, I'm very happy, for you found good things in the book. I have written it thinking to readers like you. Thank you very much."

The book also contains a few really obscure errors. Bendazzi apparently is unaware of Charles Bowers' *It's A Bird*, a rare masterpiece from 1932. He writes "Bowers disappeared from public life after 1928." He calls Fleischer's *Hoppity Goes to Town* a flop which is a common belief, but one contradicted at the Ottawa SAS Conference in 1990 by Mark Langer in his paper "From Fleischer to Famous: A Study in Institutional Failure and Reorganization." There are also a couple of questionable dates. He says John Bray's work was shown in Tokyo around 1910, while Donald Crafton in *Before Mickey* suggests Bray's first showable work was released in 1913. Bendazzi also says Bray's *The Debut of Thomas Cat*, the first color animated movie, dates from the late 1920's, while Crafton dates the release of the work February 9, 1920. When Maltin released his *Of Mice and Magic* he was told from time-to-time of minor errors like these. He kept his notes and made the needed correction in his second edition. I hope Bendazzi will do the same with this valuable work.

To find out how accurate the book is regarding animation in countries I knew little or nothing about, I asked ASIFA-SF member Tony Claar to review the chapter on Yugoslavia. He worked at Zagreb-Film Studio for over 6 years as a storyboard artist, assistant animator, animator & director of his own project.

Claar found the overall content was excellent, but he also had trouble with the English. He pointed out a few phrases that he described as awkward including the following sentence (it begins a paragraph). It says "It was the time when artistic directors were imposed from above." Nothing before or after that sentence helps explain what it means.

Tony Claar disagreed with a few of Bendazzi's opinions about the work of animators he knows and admires, but he said the facts in the chapter were excellent. One opinion he objected to was Bendazzi calling the work of Dragic "the humour of grief" and the work of

Grgic "the humour of comedy." Claar feels both men created exceptionally funny work and says neither was into black comedy. He calls the work of both men cheerful, humorous and witty.

He praised the book for introducing its readers to work "from this wonderful studio that many people have never seen. While there are errors and questionable statements, I would encourage people to buy the book as nothing else available covers this important studio in such depth. The biographies of individual animators like Dragic and Gasparovic are quite good, and the stills from the animated films are very good representations of their styles."

While it is unfortunate that the book isn't perfect, it is exceptional and the only thing like it in existence. It is an encyclopedia of animation and it should be a basic reference book in every library that includes animation books.

CLAY ANIMATION: AMERICAN HIGHLIGHTS 1908 TO THE PRESENT

By Michael Frierson, 1994, Twayne's Filmmakers Series, NY & London, \$18.95.

After having read several second and third rate books about animation in recent months, it was a real pleasure reading Frierson's account of clay animation from the turn of the century to the present. The author has a real love of his subject that comes through in the text, has done an excellent job researching his subject, has checked his facts for errors, and has a pleasant descriptive style that gives his readers a general idea of what works look like.

The book is the first serious study on the history of clay animation that includes both important technical developments and unique aesthetic approaches to the medium. In the past there have been short chapters on the art form in "how to" animation books and Will Vinton has been studied by both the popular press and scholars, but Frierson is the first to cover the subject from the invention of plasticine about 1897 by William Harbutt to its use by Vinton, Tim Hittle, Art Clokey, David Daniels, Joan Gratz and others in recent years.

The book opens with a discussion of the techniques of clay animation. Both virtues and limitations are discussed along with the rich variety of ways it has been used including painting with clay (Joan Gratz).

Frierson then goes back to the invention of plasticine, a clay that contains oil &/or wax so it will not harden quickly. Although it was created for the mold-making trade (for example making architectural decorations) it has been used in educating children, and has become the basic material for clay animation in the 20th Century.

The earliest proto-type for clay animation that the author cites is *Fun in a Bakery Shop*, Edison/Porter, 1902. In the film a baker makes

a series of funny faces in a soft modeling material that is supposed to be bread dough. The series of faces are not animated, but Frierson feels these images foreshadow the introduction of animated clay.

The next important works he cites are *A Sculptor's Welsh Rarebit Dream* (Edison, 1908) and *The Sculptors Nightmare* (Biograph, 1908). Both use lumps of clay "that magically builds itself into finished busts....Both are trick films that utilize clay to literally animate sculpture, a logical and very basic transformation of a traditionally fine art medium into moving pictures." The book then goes on to discuss other examples of early films that use animated clay to create magical sculptural images within live action shorts.

By the period of WWI Willie Hopkins and Helena Smith Dayton had pushed clay in new directions. From the few surviving works by Hopkins it appears he did bas-relief sculptures that were short comic sketches added to newsreels. There is also a fragment of a film that stars a heavy-set free-standing clay character in front of a drawn set. The character looks like a plump ginger-bread cookie.

It appears Dayton also did very short sketches that were included in newsreels. Her work featured 3D sculptures of people that interacted with each other. Apparently none of her work on film exists, but an illustrated article in *Scientific American* shows her at work and discusses the nature of her projects.

Clay was rarely used in the 1920's and '30's. There is a discussion of a clay dinosaur in Buster Keaton's *The Three Ages* (1923), the Max Fleischer Koko cartoon *Modeling* (1921) and a few other works.

In the 1940's there was a renewed interest in clay when Leonard Tregillus and Ralph Luce teamed-up in the Bay Area and created *No Credit* (1948) and *Proem* (1949). They developed a new aesthetic direction for clay as their work is a whimsical form of abstract art. These two works were picked up for distribution.

The style of Tregillus and Luce's work was probably influenced by the Art in Cinema series that was being presented at the Museum of Modern Art in San Francisco in the late 1940's and early '50's.. The series showed work by Oskar Fischinger and other modern film artists.

Tregillus was a grad student working at the U.C. Radiation Lab (PhD, 1950) who had made a cel animated short as an undergraduate at Antioch c. 1944. Little is known of Luce except that he went on to work on low budget features.

The book continues by discussing more familiar material. First there is a chapter on Art Clokey that is informative and omits most of the mumbo-jumbo account that Clokey now gives of his career.

Next comes a very long chapter on Will Vinton's career. Work made before *Closed*

Monday is discussed as well as his better known projects.

After Vinton comes a discussion of two animators I've been curious about for several years, Bruce Bickford and David Daniels. His discussion of Daniels explains how he developed the strata-cut technique and gives a detailed history of his career. Bickford, whom I know from one totally chaotic work, is treated honestly as an independent artist with intense vision who has never really fit-in with commercial filmmaking.

The book covers several other animators briefly including Tim Hittle, Eliot Noyes, Jimmy Picker, and Aardman. There are also filmographies of the work of Tregillus, Clokey, Vinton, Bickford and Daniels. Also in the back of the book is a good glossary, a short bibliography and lists of shots in 5 early shorts.

Reviewers are supposed to say critical things about books, but there are no real flaws in this work. One could suggest expanding the coverage of the animators that are barely mentioned, but the purpose of the book was not to document everything, but to present what the author believes are the important highlights of the medium's history. Let somebody else fill in the gaps and come up with the beautifully bound coffee table book on the subject.

If an intelligent, well researched and written book on clay animation appeals to you look for a copy at better bookstores or ask a store to order it for you. If you wish to order it from Twayne Publishers their address is 866 Third Ave., New York, NY 10022. KC



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BLUTO or BRUTUS?

A bully by any other name would act so rotten...

by Fred Grandinetti

There are many cartoon characters who are known throughout the world by their visual images. For example, Fred Flinstone's face could be on a child's hat, with no name, but, people will know the name of the funny caveman. While this is true of many animated characters, there is one exception; Popeye the Sailor's arch-rival for the love of Olive Oyl; Bluto/ Brutus!

Today, on countless Popeye products, the visual image of the "Brutus" character is listed with the name "Bluto" used to identify the

Bluto matched that of the Fleischers'. In 1942, Bluto began wearing a white sailor's uniform and his body became more flexible. His eyes were no longer squinty but bright eyed and he had much more expression in his beard and mouth. This version of Bluto stayed with the character during the run of the Fleischer cartoons and throughout the years that the Popeye series was being produced by Famous Studios. In a sense, Bluto was made a lil' more handsome and lost much of his early, mean and brutish design.

When the 234 Fleischer/Famous Popeye

1950's to 1959), the character of "Bluto" appeared in the comic strip in stories written by Ralph Stein and illustrated by Bela "Bill" Zaboly. This Bluto was a pirate, and he looked like the Famous Studios version except he wore a striped shirt and a prison cap. During the same time frame that "Bluto" was appearing in the Popeye comic strip, Bud Sagendorf, who was producing the Popeye comic book series, introduced a Segar/Fleischer looking bully to the cast, who went unnamed. Sagendorf explained at the time; "There was a copyright conflict when King Features decided to produce their own animated



The classic Fleischer Bluto design. (© King Features Syndicate, Inc./ courtesy Fred Grandinetti)



The design from the 1960-61 television cartoons. (© King Features Syndicate, Inc./ courtesy Fred Grandinetti)

bully. Also, the "Bluto" design is used on items, dubbed "Brutus". Apparently, King Features Syndicate does little to make sure the right name is given to the correct character design so it's high-time that animation fans got it straight, which belongs to which. First, however, we need a little history lesson on the creation of the bully.

The character of Bluto, the brute with the beard, black shirt, squinty eyes and wearing a captain's hat, first appeared in the *Thimble Theatre* comic strip (later known as *Popeye*) in 1932. He was created by E.C. Segar and was only intended for one appearance in the strip (as was Popeye who became the star due to popular demand). Max Fleischer, who was planning the *Popeye* animated cartoon series, decided to use Bluto as a regular to provide an on-going rival for Olive Oyl's affections. Segar's design of

movie cartoons debuted on TV in 1956, they became such a hit that King Features Syndicate churned out 220 color Popeyes during the years 1960 and 1961. In these new cartoons, Popeye's foe became known as "Brutus". The name change came about because Paramount Pictures, who funded the Popeye cartoons produced by both Fleischer and Famous, assumed, incorrectly, they owned the name "Bluto". Neither King Features nor Paramount did research at this time to show that the brute appeared in the funny pages first and that his name was given to him by Popeye's creator E.C. Segar! King Features didn't want to ruffle any feathers so they merely changed the bearded giant's name.

What's strange about this name change problem in the Popeye animated cartoons was at this same time period (roughly the mid-

cartoons. Why re-introduce the character if his name could not be used. The older animated films were showing on TV, making Bluto very popular. We decided to put him back in the strip." (by "strip" Sagendorf is referring to the comic books.)

For a time during the late 1950's until Popeye No #67, 1963, the brute was known in the comic books as "The mean man who hates Popeye", "The Big Guy" or mainly as "Sonny Boy". It is strange that King Features allowed the team of Stein and Zaboly to use the name "Bluto" in the strip but Sagendorf wasn't permitted to do the same in the comic books.

The 1960-61 TV cartoon version of "Brutus" featured him with a longer beard,

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NEIGHBORS: NOTES FROM THE NORTH

by Stephen Cooke

Greetings from the land of Norman McLaren and *Rocket Robin Hood*, *Lupo The Butcher* and the *Care Bears*. Yes, we Canadians are a mass of contradictions, and not even our animation is safe from succumbing to the national character.

At the moment, we're right chuffed from coast to coast over the recent Oscar victory for *Bob's Birthday*, a National Film Board of Canada co-production with Britain's Channel 4. It faced a worthy slate of competitors, but popular opinion is that *Bob's Birthday* picked up the Academy Award because it was "the funniest."

Production team Allison Snowden and David Fine, whose resume includes the whimsical golden age romance *George and Rosemary* (1987) have crafted a finely tuned portrait of mid-life crisis. Bob, a stuffy British dentist, is questioning his place in the scheme of things on the eve of turning forty, unaware his wife Margaret has planned a surprise party in honor of the occasion.

Instead of arriving home in a festive mood, Bob unleashes his anxieties, sans trousers, while the guests hide behind the furniture. Eventually, Bob's rant touches on how boring all their friends are. Margaret runs upstairs and buries her face in a pillow. Eventually, the two manage to come to terms, and leave their guests waiting in the darkness.

Bob's Birthday is bright and full of detail (watch for the severed foot!), making it just as much fun the third or fourth viewing. Character design is simple, best described as vienna sausages with limbs and hair, but a witty script and some fine voice work amply flesh things out. Speaking of flesh, it was thought the flashes of Bob's genitalia might prevent network showings of our Oscar winner, but *Bob's Birthday* has received round-the-clock airings on Bravo, a new Canadian arts channel. Bob can be sighted south of the border as part of Spike and Mike's 1995 Festival of Animation.

Those without cable have been able to see *Bob's Birthday* in theaters, courtesy of Famous Players, Canada's largest cinema chain. The twelve-minute short has been accompanying screenings of *Don Juan DeMarco*, which

ironically also concerns the waning thrill of marriage; this time between Faye Dunaway and Marlon Brando. Despite Famous Players' show of largesse, this is the first National Film Board short to receive full-scale theatrical screenings since Cordell Barker's *The Cat Came Back* nearly seven years ago. I realize they need enough room for trailers for *Die Hard 3* and *Jury Duty*, but is it too much to expect a little more bang for our box office (and taxpaying) buck?

Of course, the NFB's Oscar triumph comes at a time when the organization is facing its most severe round of cutbacks yet. The latest news is that regional film and video libraries will be closed by August, so the only access to the biggest treasury of Canadian animation (not to mention drama and documentaries) will be via a central mail order office, or to search among the handful of titles that filter into municipally-run regional libraries. Let the scavenger hunt begin.

In the meantime, The NFB is still alive and kicking as the country's leading source of innovative and entertaining animated short films. Recent releases on video include Michele Coumoyer's *La Basse Cour* (A Feather Tale); a sensual, surreal piece illustrating a woman's dream about becoming a chicken, only to be plucked and eaten by her lover. This erotic reverie is accomplished with a mixture of painted cels, rotoscoping and some stop-motion feathers, plus a haunting score by Ginette Belavance and Daniel Toussaint.

A couple of recent animated vids are intended for educational purposes, but can be viewed as sheer entertainment, even if that's not exactly what the animators had in mind. Christopher Hinton's *Watching TV* is designed to promote discussions about violence in school classrooms, but the extreme violence portrayed by Hinton, previously known for gentle comedies like *Lady Frances Simpson* and *Blackfly*, has been gaining a cult audience amongst those who simply get a visceral kick out of *Watching TV's* bloody montages. Beginning with a series of shots portraying the effect gunfire has on inanimate objects (shoes,

books), the film quickly moves on to a parody of a TV newscast (complete with an on-camera suicide and an execution) and a razor ad ("*Lady Slayer*"). *Watching TV* will be a useful tool in promoting media awareness among young people, but its shocking imagery, including the assassination of an opera singer and the explosion of a cow, also ensures an eager audience among fans of the ultra-violent.

Also featuring gruesome imagery, albeit to intentionally comic effect, is *Deadly Deposits*, a co-production between the NFB and Vancouver's International Rocketship Limited. Directed by J. Falconer (*Dog Brain*) and written by Allison Snowden and David Fine (those *Bob's Birthday* folks again), the film slips its message about environmental illness in so subtly, it's practically over by the time you realize it's educational. Two coroners investigating a mysterious death methodically poke and prod the corpse while discussing the variety of daily toxins that might have caused their subject's demise. It turns out they're wrong, but not before they graphically explain the assorted dangers present in the air around us. While this could have been a potentially dull cartoon, Snowden and Fine's dry dialogue and Falconer's imaginative visuals, including a great p.o.v. shot from inside the corpse, make *Deadly Deposits* a film worth repeating.

Speaking of International Rocketship, the team there is working on two shorts in-between commercial assignments. Marv Newland's latest is called *Fuv*, although at this stage details are sketchy.

"Is it a romance?" I asked producer Michael van den Bos. "I guess you could say that," was his reply. More on *Fuv* later.

"A little gunplay, a little bloodshed, and a few laughs," is how van den Bos describes animator Paul Boyd's first directorial effort, *Chili Con Carnage*. Boyd's previous work for International Rocketship includes the "*Wolf Home Movies*" segment of the studio's adaptation of Gary Larson's *Far Side* cartoons.

Incidentally, the *Far Side* special may soon appear on videocassette with previously deleted sequences, after another network airing. The

show has also been entered in France's Annecy Animation Festival, along with *Deadly Deposits*. I'm also informed that a Rocketship Reel Volume 2 videocassette is in the works, and may be released when *Fuv* and *Chili Con Carnage* are finished.

The east coast of Canada, where I live, hasn't exactly been known as an animation hotbed, but lately there's been more activity than we're used to seeing. Halifax's Salter Street Films is embarking on its first television science fiction fantasy series *The Dark Zone*. Beginning as four two-hour movies, *The Dark Zone* will blend live action and computer animation to tell the tale of a group of likable, no good renegades who steal the most powerful spaceship in a parallel universe. A scaleable parallel 64 c.p.u. supercomputer will be used to render backgrounds, special effects and at least one major character in the show, which creator Paul Donovan describes as "the evil twin of *Star Trek*." The studio is hovering on the brink of preproduction, with cameras (and computers) ready to roll later this summer in Halifax, Toronto and Berlin. Market-savvy Salter Street has signed up U.S. channel Showtime, Canada's City TV, Britain's BSkyB and Australia's 7 Network to run *The Dark Zone* upon completion.

On the hand drawn front, Prince Edward Island animator Jodee Samuelson is seeing her

labors on a short called *The Sandbox* nearing an end, as she prepares her final sound mix. The style can best be described as Fisher-Price-meets-*My-Neighbor-Totoro*-in watercolor, as two young girls create an imaginary world in their backyard sandbox. Things quickly get out of hand as their creations run amuck, and so-called civilization takes over, squeezing out nature, represented by the girls' teddy bear. No, it's not the most subtle theme in the world, but Samuelson's drawings have a unique charming look, and her solid sense of form and color will put her in good stead on future projects. I just hope there will be an outlet for *The Sandbox* when it's released.

Kricfalusi syndrome strikes again!

People must really think the worst of Canadian animators who go to the states and begin spouting unpopular opinions. A recent article in Canada's national newspaper, The Globe and Mail, focuses on Toronto-born and bred computer wonderkid Steve Williams who, while working at Industrial Light And Magic, gave us *Jurassic Park*'s T-Rex, *Terminator 2*'s liquid robot, and supervised all of the work on *The Mask*. The article paints Williams as a bitter guy who hates Hollywood ("I'm so mad about what these people are doing to the industry I'm thinkin' it's time to quit") and Steven Spielberg ("a second-

rate filmmaker").

Williams is currently working on new sequences for George Lucas' 20th anniversary reissue of *Star Wars*, but his most recent efforts will be seen in this summer's *Casper*, starring a computer-generated Friendly Ghost: "The logo will be on everything! It'll be like *Jurassic Park* all over again! It makes me sick."

While working at ILM, Williams has done as much as anyone in the field of applying computer images to feature films. I'm sure there are several who secretly share his opinions, but they're likely to remain secret. Besides, Williams' work has been so essential to the success of the films he has worked on, it's doubtful anyone will care if he blows off some steam. There's always his second career to fall back on; Williams becomes an artist-in-residence this fall at Toronto's Sheridan College.

The best quote in the Globe piece comes when Williams is asked about the God-like power of creating a character: "The comparison's not fair. God was given unlimited time to create new life. The animator is given about a year."



Stephen Cooke is a film critic who is ANIMATO!'s Canadian correspondent.

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A GOOFY HISTORY

He may be a Nineties kind of dad, but he's still the same old Goof!



After over 60 years in the business, Goofy finally got a feature film out of his studio, and it's a hit. (©The Walt Disney Company. All Rights Reserved)

by Jim Fanning

Goofy is Walt Disney's own Forrest Gump. A seeming simpleton, his good-hearted intentions and friendly ambition to help out or succeed at a given task somehow see him through any predicament. Whatever the mishaps or mayhem heaped upon his empty head, his always-intact innocence and unsinkable optimism puts him back on top of the heap, buck-toothed smile firmly in place.

Having gone through more change, evolution and identities than his other Disney "peers," Goofy has emerged as something of a cartoon "everyman". Each decade has brought the Goof a new persona — and the 90s, with the *Goof Troop* TV series and *A Goofy Movie* feature are no exception. Somehow, underneath it all, he remains the loveable Goofy who has been entertaining audiences for over six decades.

As would be the case with Donald Duck two years later, Walt Disney's playfully creative approach to sound led to the creation of Goofy. Studio storyman, ex-circus clown and former carnival barker Vance "Pinto" Colvig created a novelty laugh — an infectious yet inimitable guffaw that could only emit from a brainless wonder easily amused by just about anything that passed before him. The laugh suggested a

"perfect" audience so a grizzled hayseed dog, complete with whiskers and square spectacles, was plunked down in the barn bleachers to laugh mindlessly at the corny acts in *Mickey's Revue* (1932) — much to the annoyance of his fellow audience members.

This was the genesis of Goofy, but there was to be considerable change and development in both the design and personality of this new character. A reflection of his yet-to-be-perfected design and personality, this embryonic idiot was named not Goofy, but Dippy Dawg.

Audiences ate up the "h-yucking" hick and Walt Disney added Dippy to the growing Mickey Mouse repertory company, which already boasted Minnie Mouse, villain Peg-Leg Pete, Pluto the Pup and the soon-to-be-eclipsed supporting stars Clarabelle Cow and Horace Horsecollar. In Mickey's very next film *The Whoopie Party* (1932), Dippy was on hand to "help" with the refreshments. His appearance was improved; no longer the grizzled geezer, the evolving Goof was refined into a younger, eager-to-please but still easily amused rube. In *Touchdown Mickey* (1932), Dippy's next picture, Disney continued to capitalize on his new star's most unique attribute by casting him as the play-by-play radio commentator who

can't call the game because of his excited laughter.

But there was more to Dippy the Goof (the character's new name) than a trick vocal effect. Dippy was becoming adept at a brand of slapstick that was uniquely his own, almost balletic in its inept precision. In fact, the klutz actually performed a ballet of sorts with Clarabelle Cow in *Orphan's Benefit* (1934) — in which he was called, for the first time and forever after, by the absolutely accurate name, Goofy.

"Goofy" was one of Walt Disney's favorite terms, an adjective he applied to the screwball slapstick comedy that filled the frames of every Mickey Mouse cartoon. This descriptive just naturally came in handy in describing Dippy the Goof and the name stuck. (Disney and his artists would continue to call their animated funnyman "the Goof," just as they habitually referred to Mickey as "the Mouse" and Donald as "the Duck".)

The newly christened character was seen as a band member in Mickey's first color cartoon, *The Band Concert* (1935) — but it was Mickey's last black and white short that was truly a milestone for Goofy. *Mickey's Service Station* (1935) teamed for the first time

Mickey, Donald and Goofy as a trio



The grey-flannel Goofy of the Fifties. (©The Walt Disney Company. All Rights Reserved)

comically intent on some task — in this case, servicing the car of gangster Peg-Leg Pete. Art Babbitt, a master animator of the Disney Golden Age, had come to the Walt Disney Studio in 1932 after establishing himself as one of the top artists in the East Coast's animation industry. Babbitt was attracted to the character of Goofy and — just as Mickey Mouse was about to undergo a redesign that would allow him more expressive movement and personality — so Babbitt would animate Goofy into a star with a distinctive identity. "Goofy originally was a sort of stock character in most scenes, but nobody had attempted to do anything with him," Babbitt later said. "I can't say that I created Goofy, but I was the first one to build him up and give him a character."

Babbitt's starmaking makeover began with *Mickey's Service Station* in which the story artists had boarded a scene wherein the Goof goosed himself and — still not realizing that he had done it himself — slammed his own hand with a handy tool. "I wanted that scene very badly because I thought I could have fun with it," Babbitt said. "But they had only allotted I think...seven or eight feet of film for the whole business. I thought you couldn't do anything in that.... Finally, I made a deal with Disney that I could work on a sequence for Peg-Leg Pete, a character I detest. In return I could have the Goofy thing to do."

"The Goofy thing" ended up running at 50 some feet, a comically played out scene of character driven pantomime, displaying the Disney trademark: a character thinking and displaying emotion — in this case, a classic example of Goofy's own special brand of thinking.

Art Babbitt became the Goofy expert, animating the Goof with a special grace that defined the classic Goofy over the rest of the 1930s. Goofy's appearances in such cartoons as *Mickey's Fire Brigade* (1935) and *On Ice* (1935) established a one-of-a-kind cartoon character who thought things out in his own inimitable style. Top Disney storyman Ted Sears analyzed Goofy's character: "He is on the silly side and always harmless. He tries to do things in a way he considers clever. He always does them wrong and ends up with a foolish apologetic laugh. He seldom loses his temper.... In handling the Goof, we can take liberties...inanimate objects can have more life — they may be exaggerated and humanized when connected with the Goof as we feel he sees them that way."

Art Babbitt brought the Goof's character forward another quantum leap in *Moving Day* (1936) when Goofy took on a very animated inanimate object — a piano that was determined not to be moved. Goofy winds up in an extended game of hide-and-seek with the stubborn upright.

"Art really developed the Goof out of the Dippy Dawg era with his work in shorts like *Moving Day*," observed Disney animator Ward Kimball. "When the Goof walked, Art had him throw out his foot and rotate it 360 degrees at the ankle — which you can only see when you look at it slowed down. He explained to me that you can do a lot of things that defy the laws of gravity and anatomy to give an extra kick to your animation if you don't let them show." Pinto Colvig may have had a hand — or a foot — in creating Goofy's distinctive walk; he acted out Goofy's movements which were filmed and studied by Babbitt.

Babbitt summed up the Goof's appeal for him by saying "the character gave me a chance to try out all sorts of animation tricks that hadn't been tried before — things that cannot happen in real life, and yet they're perfectly acceptable in animation."

A whole series of cartoons starring Mickey, Donald and Goofy were made between 1935 and 1940, including *Clock Cleaners* (1937), *Lonesome Ghosts* (1937), *Mickey's Trailer* (1938) and *Tugboat Mickey* (1940). These classic comedies are like three cartoons in one for most are broken down into sequences, with each of the three Disney stars dealing with their own challenges before coming back together in time for the iris-out. Slow-witted, slow-moving Goofy often got the most footage as he became entangled in extended mental showdowns with the mechanical figures in a giant clock, the alluring figurehead of a ship and an uncooperative cannon (*The Whales*, 1939). (Reflecting the story artists' chronic problem of creating compelling situations for their leading mouse, poor Mickey usually ended up with the least footage in what were ostensibly his starring films. This also may explain the films of this period — *Polar Trappers* and *The Fox Hunt* (both 1938) and *Billposters* (1940) — that paired Goofy with Donald Duck and left Mickey entirely out in the cold.)

But as the 1940s dawned it seemed prudent to star each member of the Disney menagerie in his own picture. By 1940, each of the Disney stars had made at least one short they carried on their own — Goofy's solo premiere was in 1939's *Goofy and Wilbur*. That delightful short, centering on Goofy's fishing trip with his pet grasshopper, did not end up setting the format for the Goofy cartoons to follow. The famous "How To" shorts that formed the bulk of Goofy's film career were dreamed up by director Jack Kinney in the wake of Pinto Colvig's departure from the studio. Colvig had actually left in 1937 — meaning that some of the Goof's major appearances, such as *The Whalers* and *Goofy and Wilbur* were performed by different voice artists, as reported by Hames Ware in *ANIMATO!* #31, and though Colvig was to return occasionally to perform his famous voice, Disney — perhaps unsatisfied with the Colvig impersonators — was faced with somehow using a basically mute version of one of their biggest stars.

Director Kinney had been assigned the Goofy series, and his brainstorm was to place Goofy in a spoof of documentary films, complete with an omniscient, supercilious narrator who would remain oblivious to Goofy's goof-ups. "The 'how-to' format opened up a vast area," Kinney wrote in his 1988 autobiography. "The subject matter could be anything...even the wide world of sports, all open to Goofy's dum-dum exploration. What he would do in any given

story would be the hook we'd hang it on....I got a call from Walt, who said, 'Jack, this is one hell of an idea! Go ahead on it!'"

The first "How To" short, *How To Ride a Horse*, turned out so well that Disney included it in his "how-we-animate/tour-of-the-new-studio" feature, *The Reluctant Dragon* (1941). In these shorts Kinney gave Goofy a determination and athletic energy not present in Babbitt's more daydreamy Goof. (Art Babbitt left the Disney Studio as a result of the infamous 1941 strike.)

As the series went on and team sports were presented Goofy-style, Kinney had the funny idea of having each member of each team be Goofy. But this novel idea points up the weakness of the series. As funny as Kinney's cartoons are—and they were sharp and frenetic, qualities new to Disney's shorts but perfectly in tune with the times and the brash style of the competing MGM and Warner Bros. cartoons—the personality so carefully created in the 1930s for Goofy was lost.

In the 1950s, this devolution was carried a step further when Goofy—dressed in a business suit and even at times appearing sans floppy ears and buck teeth—became the mild-mannered suburban father of a series of domestic sitcom-like cartoons, such as *Fathers Are People* (1951) and *Father's Weekend* (1953). Often called "George" or "Mr. Geef" Goofy had an office job, a wife and a little boy and battled with domestic situations much like those seen in TV comedies of the era.

Goofy made the occasional appearance as his old self in cartoons such as *Two Gun Goofy* (1952) and *For Whom the Bulls Toil* (1953) as he did on the Disney TV anthology show. One most interesting TV episode was "The Goofy Success Story" (1955), written and directed by Jack Kinney, the program offered a fictionalized but still quite historically faithful account of Goofy's career in cartoons.

But Goofy was pretty much put out to pasture along with the other Disney stars, when short cartoons were phased out in the mid 1950s. He made his comeback in two very effective "performances" in *Mickey's Christmas Carol* (1983) and *The Prince and the Pauper* (1990), and in 1992 he became the first of Disney's standard characters to star in his own TV series, *GoofTroop*. Though seemingly a return to the 1950s sitcom shorts—Goofy as a dad trying to cope with his son Max—the series presented a Goofy that was basically true to the original character.

The success of the series and the continuing popularity of Goofy himself led to the decision to star the Goof in his own feature film. Released in spring 1995, *A Goofy Movie* has been a hit with both critics and audiences.

Animated primarily in France by a group of international talents assembled at Disney's

newest studio, *A Goofy Movie* represents a significant departure for a Disney animated feature (though the film is not considered a part of the canon of Disney's "official" full-length animated features.) Initiated by a special unit of Disney's Television Animation team, the filmmakers strove for feature quality standards but chose a storyline that was more contemporary than the traditional approach usually favored by the Studio for its standard characters.

Multitalented director/animator/designer/story artist Kevin Lima, who had worked on such major Disney features as *The Little Mermaid*, *Aladdin* and *The Lion King*, as well as *The Brave Little Toaster*, was brought on board to direct, and Dan Rounds (who had previously worked with Goofy on the big screen featurette, *The Prince and the Pauper*) produced. With all the character design, art direction and storyboarding completed in Burbank, the film moved on to the suburbs of Paris where over 150 artists and animators (under the supervision of Parisians Paul and Gaëtan Brizzi) devoted several years to bringing the story to life. Additional work on the film was done at Disney outposts in California, Australia, Spain and Canada.

Director Kevin Lima told Disney Publicity, "Instead of just keeping Goofy one-dimensional as he's been in the past, we wanted to give him an emotional side that would add to the emotional arc of the story. We wanted the audience to see his feelings instead of just his antics. It would be great if moviegoers could laugh and cry with Goofy. Everyone expects to laugh at him, because he's a great comedic actor, but it would be great if they could also be moved by him." (It has been a long time since 1939's *Goofy and Wilbur* in which Goofy wept over the apparent loss of Wilbur.)

In an interview with Disney Publicity, producer Dan Rounds recalled, "When we first started working on this film, the idea was to do a spin-off from the television show, but as we got into it we realized that no one would want to watch Goofy tripping over himself for 80 minutes. We ended up basically redesigning all the characters, recasting many of them and rethinking their relationships. We spent a huge amount of time writing a strong and entertaining story that was driven by the characters. The film is really about the evolution of this relationship between a father and son. At the start of their journey, they don't get along; they don't communicate. By the end, there is a happy resolution and a better understanding between them."

Brian Pimental, who served as story supervisor and one of the film's three screenwriters, found that Goofy was ultimately well suited for the part. "I think that he is a character that practically everyone can relate to," he said. "It's easy to sympathize with

Goofy because there's a little bit of him in all of us. For that matter, most of us have experienced what Max is going through at one point or another in our lives. We tried to keep things very human with the underlying story about two characters that were kind of close once and are trying to find each other again."

Having previously worked on *GoofTroop*, animator Dominique Monfery was already familiar with the design and basic movements of the lead character.

"The big difference here," he said, "is that there is more emotion and more thinking going on. This movie was a pleasure to work on because Goofy not only is fun to animate with his broad antics but here he also has many more human qualities and lots of heart. He's still a bit goofy, but there is more substance to his performance. Having knowledge of mime was very helpful and Kevin's tapes [acting out the character's performance] and drawings gave us some very specific ideas to work with."

The success of *A Goofy Movie* proves the timeless appeal of an animated character who has earned the right to be considered "classic". Whether barnyard hayseed, a good sport or a pleased but plagued pop, Goofy is always just Goofy. Director Jack Kinney may have put it best: "Goofy is Mr. Common Man. People can sympathize with him because that's not them, that's somebody else being crazy."

As with Tom Hanks' Forrest Gump characterization, audiences love watching a character so stupid he's actually smart—and we love watching Goofy being goofy. 

Jim Fanning has often covered Disney animation for ANIMATO!



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Friz Freleng

1909-1995



"The moving finger draws;
and having drawn,
moves on."

Paraphrased from Omar Khayyam



Bill Hanna Joe Barbera

ONCE MORE, WITH FRELENG

The passing of animation director Friz Freleng reminds all animation fans of the diminishing number of people who were the architects of what is called "The Golden Age of Animation." A man who started his career with Walt Disney, worked with Harmon and Ising, and then joined the animation unit operated by Leon Schlesinger, Freleng not only worked with the greats, he became one of the greats. He created new characters and polished existing stars, and won three of the four Oscars Warner Brothers received for its animation. After leaving the studio, his association with partner David DePatie was marked with the notable success of the Pink Panther. All of us at ANIMATO! mourn the passing a true animation legend, Friz Freleng.

Harry McCracken wrote this appreciation in ANIMATO! #18. Pat and I thought it would be appropriate to reprint it. GMD

by Harry McCracken

Warner Bros. fans tend to take Friz Freleng for granted. The accomplishments of other major Warner directors are easier to pin down: it was Tex Avery who built the foundations of the Warner style, Bob Clampett who stretched it to its looniest extremes, and Chuck Jones who refined it to its most sophisticated state.

Freleng, by contrast, has merely spent six decades (off and on) as one of the studio's top talents, starting by animating *Bosko the Talk-Ink Kid*, the first Warner cartoon, and continuing into the 1980's, during which he has directed three compilation features and served as a consultant to other studio works. But to conclude that his cartoons are superbly-crafted entertainments (which they usually are), rather than lofty works of art or daring experiments is hardly to demean them; call him Harold Lloyd to Jones's Chaplin and Avery's Keaton.

Freleng made many of his best cartoons in the late 1940s and early 1950s, a period when Clampett, Avery and Tashlin had left the studio, and he and Jones (and sometimes Bob McKimson) were polishing the Warner style into a more purely character-oriented, slightly gentler form. Like Lloyd's films, Freleng's cartoons derive much of their considerable appeal from their simple zeal and quick-wittedness; there's something marvelously about his work. His Bugs Bunny is Bugs at his most energetically clever, and Freleng characters as disparate as Tweety, Yosemite Sam, and Speedy Gonzales share a likable wide-eyed alertness as a distinguishing characteristic.

Freleng's greatest strength as a director was the facility with which he staged his material. Cartoons like *Rocketeer Rabbit* (1946), *High Diving Hare* (1949), and *Knighty Knight Bugs* (1958) are classic Freleng: streamlined, conflict comedies in which every gag is carried out in a way that's straightforward, efficient - and hard to find fault with. Several critics have remarked on Freleng's love of corny, vaudeville-type jokes; they're right, but there's a lot of subtlety beneath that broad humor. One of the highest

compliments you can pay his cartoons is that the more carefully you watch them, the funnier they are. His use of facial expressions is a case in point: unlike Jones, he rarely calls attention to them or derives humor directly from them. But the expressions in Freleng's best films are always amusing, always appropriate, and always contributing to the quality of the cartoon's humor.

Freleng has voiced his disinterest in creating Avery-style departure from reality in his work, and this orientation shows up in numerous ways in his cartoons. It's easy to forget how many of his cartoons had unusual but well-realized settings, from the Lower East Side of *A Hare Grows in Manhattan* (1947) to the Revolutionary War of *Bunker Hill Bunny* (1950). Even when

he followed Hollywood animation's rush into UPA-inspired stylization, his cartoons usually took place in three-dimensional sets, rather than against flat backdrops: the cottage in *Goldmouse and the Three Cats* (1960) is a very real, atmospheric place, down to the warped floorboards.

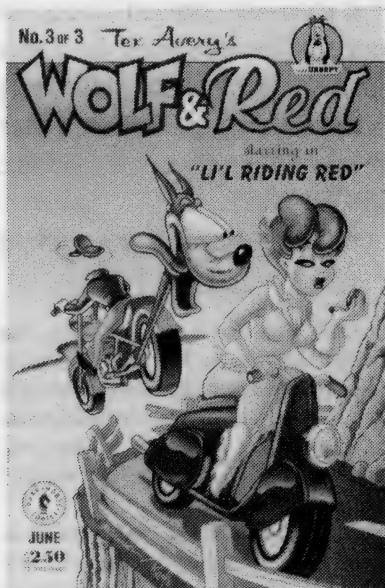
The conceit that cartoon characters are in reality hard-working, high-spirited entertainers, recently popularized by *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*, was used by Freleng in several cartoons, including *Curtain Razor* (1949), *Show Biz Bugs* (1957), and, most notably, *You Ought To Be In Pictures* (1940). That's a nice way to look at Friz Freleng, too: like his characters, one of the most consummate entertainers in animation history.



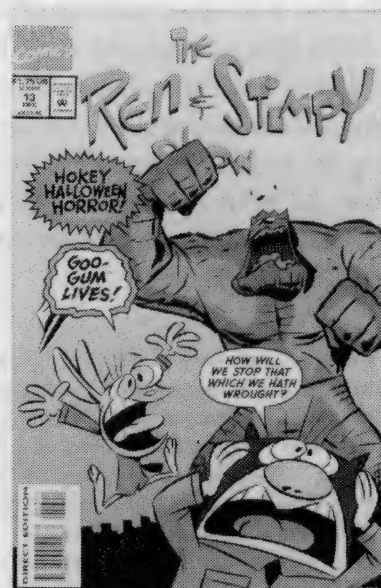
Duquette 1996

AN ANIMATO! GUIDE

ANIMATED COMICS



You seen them at the local comic book shop, and now here's the lowdown on what's good and what's not



by Judith Reboy

Rising costs have made merchandising a vital part of the entertainment industry. Animation in particular, because of its uniquely broad appeal, has become a gold mine for ancillary merchandising.

Witness the growth of the Warner Brothers and Disney studio stores, which feature attire with likenesses of animated characters for every member of the family, but virtually no tie ins for live action products.

Comic books based on cartoons have been a staple of merchandising for decades. But with the rising popularity of both mediums in the

past decade, we are currently experiencing a boom in cartoon-related comics.

In the Sixties, many comic book versions of popular favorites bore little resemblance to their animated selves. Remember the dreaded *Beep Beep the Road Runner* comics in which an articulate Road Runner protected his family from the "evil" Wile E. Coyote? They certainly never even came close to capturing the appeal of Chuck Jones' original characters.

Thankfully, the overall quality of today's tie-in comics is much higher. Let's take a look at some of the current offerings, in alphabetical order, more or less.

Aladdin is part of Marvel's subdivision based on Disney characters. As with all of the titles in this line, the character artwork is very good, although the backgrounds are rather plain.

Like the series, the writing is either the worst or best thing about the book. A bittersweet time travel story in which Aladdin was unknowingly reunited with his mother was quite touching. In a different vein, another issue featured a hysterical story in which Genie and an increasingly miffed Rajah the tiger stage a Sigfried and Roy-type stage show for a visiting princess.

On the other hand, a story about a genie convention had such a lack of internal story logic that it was impossible to follow. And a story where Aladdin and Jasmine switch bodies had a far too familiar ring to it.

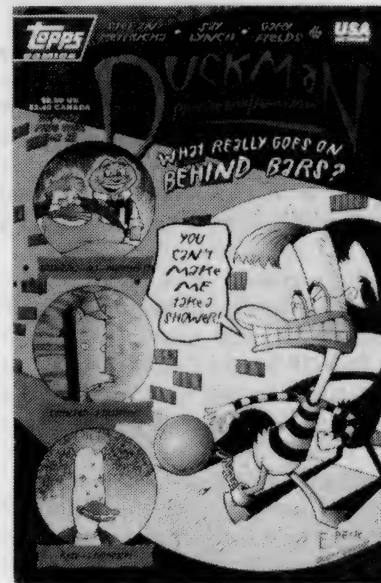
The appeal of DC Comics' *Animaniacs* depends on your familiarity with the series. But then, if you aren't familiar with the series, you

probably wouldn't buy it anyway!

Thus far, the stars of the book have been the Warner Brothers and Dot, who are the closest thing the show has to stars, and Pinky and the Brain, who will have their own spin off series on the Warner Network this Fall.

I can't quite place why this title falls a little flat. It's an excellent attempt at translating the show to comics form, and the artwork is pretty good. Maybe in print, the pacing is just a little bit off.

DC began a whole new subgenre of tie in comics with *The Batman Adventures*, which takes place outside the DC Universe and inside



the continuity of *Batman: The Animated Series/The Adventures of Batman and Robin*. Marvel and Image have done similar titles for shows based on their comics, and Dark Horse plans to follow suit when *The Mask* becomes a cartoon series.

At its best, *The Batman Adventures* is the best cartoon based comic on the market. Although the artwork is a scaled down version of the series design, it has its own distinctive style. And while DC originally claimed it was aimed at a younger audience, it is far more thoughtfully written than the regular Batman titles.

There have been special issues of *The Batman Adventures* written and drawn by people actually involved in the television series, and these are the best of the best. If you are lucky enough to find it, *The Batman Adventures Special: Mad Love* is an engrossing book.

Mad Love tells the untold origin of the Joker's sidekick, Harley Quinn, which has only been alluded to on the television show. It's also a fascinating look at their abusive relationship, and while it never really explains why Harley would stay with someone who mistreats her so badly — In fact, some revelations make her codependent behavior even more surprising — it all seems frighteningly believable.

Again, this is not a children's book. While it contains nothing graphic, *Mad Love* features hints of unexpected sexuality and cruelty that I personally wouldn't give to a preteen. But I wholeheartedly recommend it for grownups.

My only serious complaint is that I'd like a little more Batman in *The Batman Adventures*. In some issues, he has been reduced to a cameo, which in at least one instance did not influence the outcome of the story at all!

Disney has tried a *Beauty and the Beast* comic a couple of times, and it just doesn't work, because the title characters' entire relationship was documented in the feature film. Once he wins Belle's love, the Beast transforms into a prince, and not a horribly interesting prince at that!

During the film's theatrical run, Disney Comics produced a prequel version, which featured the adventures of preteen Belle, with a back up story with the Beast and his enchanted servants. Naturally, it was unsuccessful because the characters never meet.

The current Marvel version is equally unsatisfying as it details Belle's life as the Beast's prisoner. Since we all know how things will turn out, the characters cannot grow or develop. And since the Beast does not welcome visitors, there isn't much of an opportunity for new characters to be introduced. In short, there just doesn't seem to be a compelling reason for this book.

Disney Adventures is the lone survivor of Disney's comic book division. It's a digest sized publication which features the kind of

overly simple features about everything from celebrities to science that I think I would have glossed over even as a kid. But their comics, mostly featuring the cast of the *Disney Afternoon*, are funny and nicely illustrated, if a little short. Last year's parody of multi-book crossovers was a gem, featuring everybody from Goofy to Darkwing Duck.

Another thing that *Disney Adventures* has in its favor is its sheer availability. Most discount stores and grocery stores sell it at the checkout counters.

I am not a big fan of *Duckman*, but I can heartily recommend the Topps Comic version to those who are. It recreates his highly stylized universe in loving detail. It also underscores one of the nicest things about *Duckman*. While it may not be everyone's cup of tea, it is reassuring to know that someone is savvy enough to realize that there is a market for a cartoon that is made exclusively for an adult audience.

Gladstone Comics has made a fortune reprinting Carl Bark's legendary Disney Comics. Now its Hamilton Comics subdivision has started to produce books based on licensed properties.

Not unexpectedly, their top seller is *Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers*. But another Fox property, *Eek! the Cat*, became a Hamilton Comic long before the Power Rangers took over the airwaves.

The entire *Eek!* miniseries is available exclusively from Wal-Mart as a polybagged set. (Also included is a bonus comic adaptation of the Alex Winter horror spoof *Freaked*, which leads me to wonder if the company which bought it from Hamilton for distribution had any idea what they had!)

Unfortunately, it is painfully obvious that this book has been sitting around for awhile. *Elmo the Elk* and the *Terrible Thunderlizards*, for example, are nowhere to be seen. However, a die hard fan will still find many things to like, such as a story which seems to exist primarily to give Mom a chance to use the skills she learned from her bizzaro Berlitz tapes.

It does strike me a little strange, though, that while major characters like the *Squishy Bearz* are totally unrecognizable, *Eek's* Uncle Mac, a one-shot character, is recreated perfectly. Still, I think that part of the problem is that, like *Rocky and Bullwinkle* before him, *Eek* may not translate to comics as well, because the timing of the gags is thrown off just a little.

It's still a worthy read, and if you're one of those people who doesn't quite understand the world of *Eek*, there's a nicely written essay at the end of each issue that explains it nicely. (If only it was not exactly the same in every issue!)

Considering that *Gargoyles* is almost universally praised for its production design and its adult-oriented storytelling, one would think that Marvel would be courting trouble by veering from that format. But, surprisingly, it

stands up remarkably well on its own.

The comic book world is even darker and grittier than one has any right to expect from a *Disney Afternoon* show. The first story arc, in which one of Xanatos' companies turns a young woman into a vampire, is just as touching as it is fantastical.

Strangely, in this story, the heroic Goliath is only a minor character. The three adolescent gargoyles, who are primarily comedy relief on the show, share the spotlight with their detective friend, Elisa, who struggles to keep their existence a secret without compromising a murder investigation.

The last issue of this story arc, in which the vampire's romance with one of the young gargoyles ends tragically, stayed with me long after I finished it. I would advise potential readers to keep an open mind about this book, because it's beautifully written, if on a completely different level than the series that spawned it—Not better or worse, just different.

Looney Tunes, as I mentioned earlier, have been a comic book staple for years. But they've never been represented better than in the current DC version. It's nearly impossible to recreate the rapid fire delivery of a classic Warner cartoon on the printed page, but the writers keep things moving by taking familiar *Looney Tune* scenarios and presenting them with a twist. When Taz confronts Bugs in the woods with culinary intentions, Daffy Duck is along for the ride, allowing for the wordplay along the lines of "Duck, Rabbit, Duck." When Elmer Fudd hears Santa coming down his chimney, it really is Santa, not Daffy in a Santa suit.

There also seems to be a conscious effort to include at least one seldom seen character in each issue. The Witch Hazel story was particularly memorable. (Could we see Marc Anthony and Pussyfoot, please???)

Marvel Action Hour has two spin off titles, *Marvel Action Hour: Iron Man* and *Marvel Action Hour: Fantastic Four*. While one can usually attribute the strength of a tie-in book to its accuracy to the source material, the *Action Hour* books adapt the teleplays into the style of a regular Marvel comic.

Iron Man benefits more from this conceit, because the series strays so heavily from its source material, which contrary to the title, is an Avengers spin off called *Force Works*. A recent issue retelling the origin of the lead villain, the Mandarin, jettisoned most of the television version in favor of the original comic book story. But most of the changes are far more subtle.

The artwork is somewhat more convincing, helped, no doubt, by not having to deal with the jarring computer generated scene of Tony Stark donning his Iron Man armor. The writing is also

Continued on Page 70

HEARING VOICES: SCREWY and SNIFFLES SOLVED!!!!

Thanks to ANIMATO! and the old-time radio connection via Keith Scott

by Hames Ware

Twenty years ago when Graham Webb and I collaborated with Milt Gray and Mike Barrier in Mike's excellent animation magazine *Funnyworld* on the definitive piece on who did what voices in the theatrical cartoons of the 30's, 40's & 50's, the biggest gaping hole we had unfilled at the time was - who had done the voice of Tex Avery's zany *Roger Rabbit* precursor - Screwy Squirrel.

Twenty years later when ANIMATO!'s Michael Dobbs graciously offered me the opportunity to write this column, we were still no closer to an answer, although Graham had uncovered a sound-alike singer-musician for Spike Jones - Dick Morgan.

My hope, though Graham was skeptical, was the ANIMATO! article might reach someone who might give us the boost we needed to solve remaining voice mysteries, Graham, understandably, felt almost all the first hand sources had long ago been depleted and such an esoteric search as ours had little chance of eliciting much new input. But what would happen soon after the first ANIMATO! column was published would rouse even Graham to a level of excitement seldom matched in all our years of research!

The unexpected and welcome response the ANIMATO! column brought forth pinnacled with a phone call all the way from Australia. It was from Keith Scott, the Mel Blanc of Australia, who'd read the original *Funnyworld* piece years ago, and finally was prompted to call upon hearing from the ANIMATO! article that we were still at it.

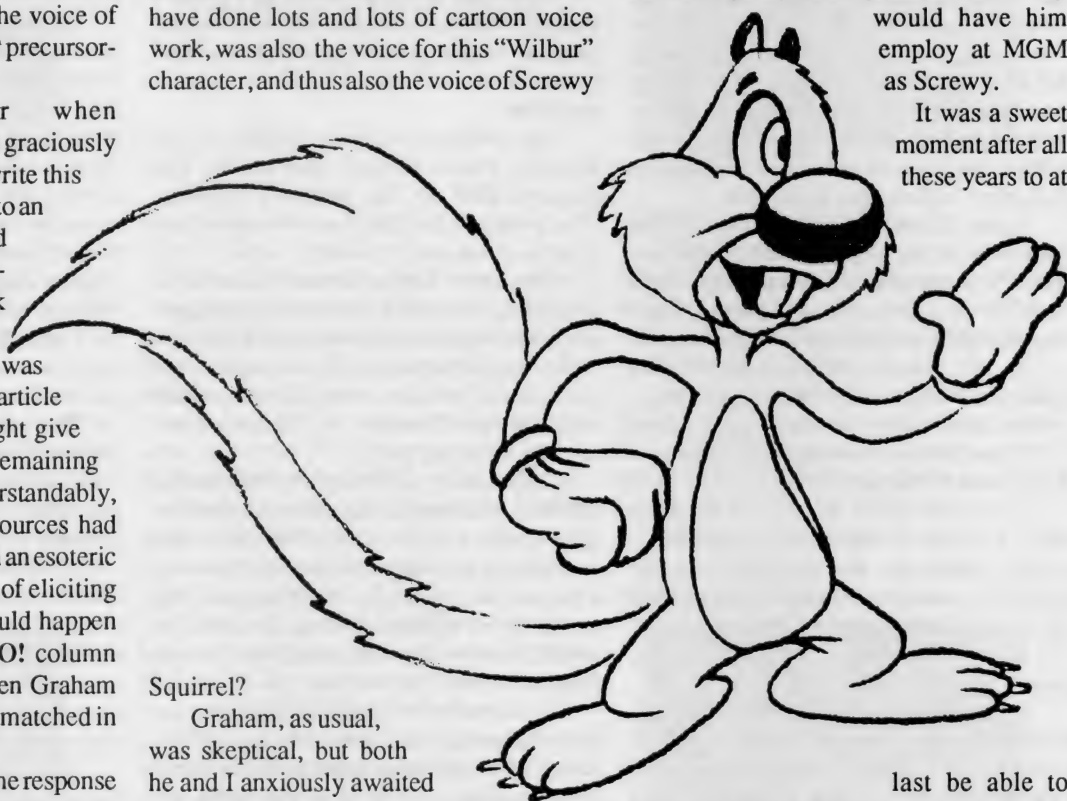
Keith, in addition to voicing lots of cartoon characters himself, had also been, like Graham and myself, intrigued with discovering the identities of lesser known

cartoon voice actors. Keith also was a fan of old-time radio shows and has amassed 100's of old radio shows for researching voices. Keith mentioned that in one of these radio shows, a Jack Benny anniversary show, featured who he thought was the Screwy Squirrel voice actor playing a nasally whacky kid named Wilbur. Though the cast credits at the end of the show were sparse, Cliff Nazarro, who'd appeared on the show also - singing and doing his marvelous double talk routine was credited. Could it be Nazarro, who was known to have done lots and lots of cartoon voice work, was also the voice for this "Wilbur" character, and thus also the voice of Screwy

Tommy Riggs and Betty Lu Sutton Show), was the name of the actor who, soon after the tapes were received and further research was done, on whom all of us would agree. The voice of Screwy Squirrel was Wally Maher, a more or less standard radio supporting actor (*Dragnet*, et al). Maher, whose natural voice was hardly out of the ordinary, was not only Screwy Squirrel but also, according to Ken Greenwald (Pacific Pioneers) had, as Wilbur, a big following especially among kids of 40's radio, using the same goofy catch phrases Tex Avery

would have him employ at MGM as Screwy.

It was a sweet moment after all these years to at



Squirrel?

Graham, as usual, was skeptical, but both he and I anxiously awaited the dubs of the Benny show Keith had promised to send.

Meanwhile the name Wilbur had struck a responsive chord in both my and Keith's memory (in Keith's case he recalled Ken Greenwald of Pacific Pioneers Radio Library suggesting similarities) and independently we both returned to the excellent *Tune in Yesterday* radio reference book by John Dunning. And there, in a description of another comedic nasally whacky kid named Wilbur (heard on the

last be able to credit the wonderful screwy voice with the name of the person who'd done it (and also a bit frustrating to realize that the whole matter never would have been a mystery in the first place had we been around as avid listeners of the *Tommy Riggs and Betty Lu Sutton Show*!) (And kudos to Ken Greenwald for pointing Keith in the right direction). So we had our Screwy voice at last and if Wally Maher's I.D. had been all that had resulted from Keith's joining our voice detecting team that new name would have

been sufficient.

But more was soon to come! **ANIMATO!** readers may recall that the first hearing voices column I wrote ("Will the Real Sniffles Please Stand Up!" issue #28) was primarily concerned with putting forward a hypothesis, that suggested the ubiquitous Sara Berner as Sniffles' voice (after ruling out the previous best guess - the mysterious and elusive Bernice Hansen, who unlike any other of the major cartoon voice people, has yet to be found in any other media!)

Readers may also recall my noting that collaborator Graham Webb had a different theory. Well, woe to any cartoon history writer who took my guess as gospel!! For as Keith Scott graciously continued to feed us old time radio shows with cartoon-type based casts, he hit a treasure trove with *The Joe Penner Radio Show!*

Penner, an original zany, had surrounded himself with a wonderful cast-many of whom before, then and after, had done cartoon voices as well. (Mel Blanc, Roy Atwell, et al). One of the cast members, playing Joe's scatter brained girlfriend Suzie was an actress Graham had long had on his list of possibles for doing the Sniffles

voice - Gay Seabrooke (her name had also cropped up at the Disney Archives as having done "Little Voices.")

The moment Graham, Keith and I heard Gay Seabrooke's voice, the Sara Berner scenario and all other conjecture fell by the wayside. Until and unless Chuck Jones should finally remember otherwise, Gay Seabrooke (an attractive ingenue seen, in among other live actors, in some *Our Gang* series) shall remain our mutual nominee for Sniffles.

To be sure, as Graham has noted, Sniffles had more than one voice, so that Sara Berner or any number of other "small voice" actresses like radio's Sylvia Picker, et al, may still prove to be Sniffles' "other" voice.

And the new discoveries haven't ended with these two coups. Since both Keith and I do voices for a living he was able to concur with me that we could finally lay the Egghead voice to rest.

Years ago, Graham had been able to narrow down Egghead - Joe Penner imitation voice (though Keith and Ken Greenwald believe, as I do, it's as close to the real Penner as could be done) to two people thanks to a letter response he had

received from Mel Blanc. Blanc had responded that though he could not recall for certain, but that Egghead's voice had to have been done by either aforementioned, novelty singer and double talker Cliff Nazarro or by "my dear pal Dave Weber."

Back in the *Funnyworld* days, since we knew little or nothing of Dave Weber or his work, we opted for Nazarro as our best guess. (and even though again, it was just like Hansen for Sniffles, our best "guess" was lifted out of the article by others and used as gospel.)

Now we know, as I walked Keith through the other mimicry I had uncovered Weber doing in cartoons (Rochester, Fred Allen, Edward G. Robinson, Walter Winchell, The Camel in *Porky in Egypt*) Keith agreed the Penner voice was Weber after all. The clincher came, when in Hollywood, Keith found a photo of Weber in a Joe Penner pose complete with Penner's unique cap-hat. Another long time voice mystery finally resolved.

And so thanks to the **ANIMATO!** exposure, cartoon voice detectives were able to unite, and by pooling our collective

Continued on Page 71

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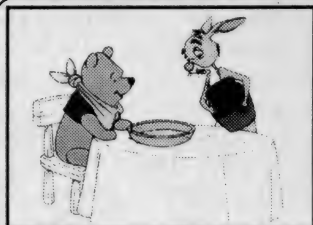
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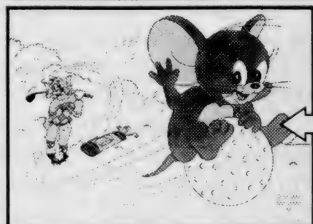
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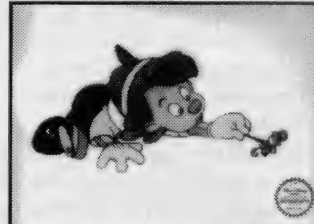


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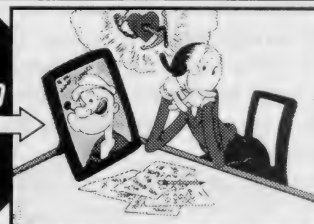
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Interview With The Space Ghost



by Joseph A. Reboy

War, it has been written, is hell. Many of us are not capable of heroic feats that fight the good fight, of standing down the bad guy and righting the wrongs of the world. That's when heroes are called for.

What follows is the story of that fight. Of the man who fought it. Of the women who loved him, and of the Monster who played the music!

The battleground is television, where the message is the medium and the messenger often gets killed. The battle in question is the Late Night Talk Show wars. Briefly, these wars erupted sometime in the latter half of the 1980's on Earth at a time when Johnny Carson, the undisputed and mostly benevolent king of late night was nearing the twilight of his years. Many tried and failed to take his crown. Their names are legion...Arsenio, Chevy, Whoopi, Cynthia Stevenson (of *My Talk Show*), Rick Dees, Merv Griffin, and so on...

In a Marshall McCluen-styled twist of fate television may have spawned its own king of late night. The newest player on the field, and the most original, Space Ghost!

Moved by the sheer auspiciousness of it all, I contacted the Cartoon Network, the Earth-based receiving station of Space Ghost's broadcasts. They were only too happy to help me get in touch with the man from outer space who bore an uncanny resemblance to the most recent Batman.

I wanted to know many different things about S.G.. Who was he? Where did he come from? What about his trousers? He turned out to be a gregarious, enthusiastic host and, though

the interview was conducted like most of his, over a monitor, a very warm person.

A monitor? Why a monitor? "Well, that of course was the only way we could do it. We have to go from deep, deep space where the Ghost Planet is, to your planet, Planet Earth, in order to interview all the fascinating people who came on the program."

This man of action, known to us from strange broadcasts to Earth in the mid sixties, as a fighting man, was now working a desk job. It seemed unusual that he wouldn't be out roaming around, doing interviews here on Earth, "Actually, that might be happening. You never know. I wouldn't want to tip my hand. Yes, we may be planning an

extended vacation to your planet."

Definitely different due to his high-tech wrist weaponry and unique fashion sense, what sets him apart from the competition in more integral matters? "Well, first off I'm more animated than they are. I think also what I can bring is a certain feeling of safety that the guests don't get on any other show. They come on my program and they feel safer than they would, say, with Leno. The set could catch on fire! Although Bobcat Goldthwaite didn't do that to us. They just come on and they know they are going to be treated like ladies and gentlemen, they're not going to have to worry about anything. And if Zorak and Moltar get out of line I'll just have to give them a blast with the old spank ray!"

My first hard question! I distinctly recalled the BeeGees from the first episode of the series. Their fate was brighter than their collective careers. Specifically, *Space Ghost*, the host of the show, projected a deadly ray from his wrist bands that vaporized the musical group. While the music industry barely rippled in despair, how could this warrior claim safety first? "Oh those Biggies (that's how he pronounced their name)! You know, they were a hostile bunch. Those Biggies came in looking for trouble, but as you could tell I quickly ended that little melee with a blast from the wristbands and we got right along with the closing credits! No more Biggies! Closing Credit Time!"

Clearly, I was dealing with a man with the faith of his own convictions.

So, apart from the Biggies... er... BeeGees, guests could feel safe on the show? "Oh,

absolutely. Even if you're watching from a bad part of town."

The Larry Sanders Show, the HBO series that chronicles a talkshow from backstage, offers us a glimpse into the makings of this particular genre. How does that show stack up to the reality of *Space Ghost: Coast to Coast*? "I think they both have their own unique flavor. How's that for a diplomatic answer? I think they each have their own unique flair, and while Gary Shandling is funny of course, you have a different degree of funny with us, don't you? It's a more powerful, I think less Earth-bound kind of funny. It's a more galactic kind of humor, more universally appealing! At least we hope." Space Ghost breaks out in laughter.

From our first glimpse into the real cartoon universe with the Roger Rabbit movie we have known that the Cartoon Tooniverse is a tight-knit group that usually stands by it's own. How have his peers been about S.G.'s newfound fame? "I will admit Plastic Man has grown cooler. He was a little less social on our last golf outing. I think he's jealous. We're getting press...what's the last thing Plastic Man did? He threw a Tupperware party, big whoop!... 'this seals in garden vegetables for extra crispness...' uh, er... thanks Plastic Man! I save the Planet! He's got a terrible back-swing! You'd think Plastic Man would be able to hit the ball pretty well, but he really can't hit. He doesn't follow through. I offered to take him out to the driving range, but would he go? Nooooo... Too important to go golfing with Space Ghost!"

Veering away from what was obviously an uncomfortable subject I asked the big guy what he enjoys more? Performing, subduing villains, or doing the talk show thing? "Oh all three! Goodness gracious, I really think now I couldn't have one without the other. I think what the talk show is going to do is let me retire sooner, let one of the younger guys take over."

I probed deeper into that last comment and asked if there were any Deborah Norville/*All About Eve* kind of characters waiting in the wings for S.G. to walk away from it all, "Oh, I couldn't imagine. I think we all have quite a few wonderful years of the program... I may have to solve one or two major crimes in the future, you always have to be ready for trouble, Citizen Joe, you always have to be ready for trouble!"

And ready for trouble he is. The man pulled two of his most fearsome foes, Zorak and Moltar (late of the Council of Doom!) from prison and installed them on his show as, respectively the bandleader and the director. If they didn't like him before how does he relate to them now? "They are my enemies! We will dine together. As you've heard on the show we do go out

socially, but that is as much so I can continue to keep an eye on them as anything else. As the old saying goes... 'Keep your friends close and your Mantis and Fire-Crazed maniacal director even closer!'"

Speaking of keeping people closer, how have women reacted to S.G. now that he is famous again? "Well, I think it's safe to say, Citizen Joe, and forgive me for using a Sixties term, but I think chicks dig me. I think they know that Space Ghost has got what they are looking for! Muscles, intelligence, a zany, wry wit...an Algonquin-esque type humor if you will. I think since the talk show they look at you...well, before its like 'Super Hero, okay, hoopde doo, what have you done for me lately?' But now they can go 'Super Hero? Boy I really liked that Biggies thing! Super Hero? Brandford Marsalis was really funny! Super Hero...' I think it's added a new dimension. Who could resist?"

The shows guests and dialogue spotlight a good deal of Earth Pop Culture. Who's influence was that? "I'm responsible for most of the Cokes," admits Space Ghost, "The problem with Coca Cola...I drink too much of it before I begin the show. But the writers all contribute universally to the flavor of the show. The nice thing is, if an interview is going in a particular way and I say something that tickles, and there have been occasions where I have said things where they have said 'We should keep that, don't throw that away, Space Ghost was funny.'"

I elaborated that references to the Adam West interviews, the *Gilligan's Island* episode, the Seventies sit-com actors episode, were leading in a general direction that seemed to predominate the shows style. "That's an interesting theory. I think in the coming weeks you will see some broadening. I just wanted you to know that the writers do the majority of the work so I can just kick back and let the Mantis and the Fire-Maniac do the rest. But yeah, there has been pretty much a Danny Bonaduce/Cindy Olsen fetish if you will. However we are branching off into other areas. I think you will see a very balanced program. A healthy smattering from all of your interview food groups, if you will."

Jumping back a little to a more basic question, I found myself still curious about something. I was coming to see a man of confidence who certainly stood comfortable on the battlefield. But what the heck was he doing in a T.V. talk show? Why did he choose this warzone? "Well, I just thought it would be the ideal place to get involved. If you're going to learn about nuclear weapons, I thought, what better way to go than to a test site? True? So that was our thinking there. It wouldn't have made any sense to do it as a morning show because then we would have been mixed up with Oprah and the others, and it wouldn't make any sense to do it as an early evening

show because then they might have thought 'Oh *Hard Copy*, *A Current Affair*, one of those!' So we really had to introduce this particular style in the genre to which it would lend itself most appropriately. Do battle with the other major players! I do hope that made sense...that was quite a mouthful of words. Sometimes I just say words because I like the way they roll out of my mouth, such as...Perspicacity! Which I think is when you have reached your sweating potential!"

Given the battlefield what was S.G.'s strategy to defeat the competition? "Well, I couldn't really reveal that, could I? If I told you, you could print it, and the others could take it, couldn't they?"

But this is an interview...

"Well, we don't want to give the farm away...well, let's see, how can I do it? I'll be engaging, I'll be charming, I'll be witty, I'll get bigger ratings, then I will buy the other networks and I will put Leno and Letterman to work on my farm growing space-radishes and doing my bidding! Maybe have them working around the house...I'll be nice to them like I was to Zorak and Moltar."

We all have heroes. To many of us Space Ghost himself is a hero. Who does he look up to? "Of course there are all of my good friends at the Cartoon Network, I look up to them...I look up to Albert Einstein, without whom there would have been no time/space continuum with the concept of space travel people wouldn't have tampered with it as quickly as they did...I think they would have been frightened, they would have still thought the Earth was flat. Newton! I admire him. I admire Bobcat Goldthwaite, he does that thing with the lower teeth coming out, very spooky...very spooky. I like the face! I admire the fine work you're doing at ANIMATO! I admire my Mom for

having me, and I admire the academy for the award which they will give me...Oh, I left out Zazu Pitz! Don't forget Zazu!"

Space Ghost is the adoptive parent of Jan and Jace, the twins who have since gone off to college. Being occasional defender of the universe, and a talk show host, and with no apparent wife, how does he do it? "Well," he offers gregariously, "There was a brief fling with Agnes Moorehead, but that fizzled. It's funny you would mention that. I'm reminded of a classic Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young song that I think sums it up rather nicely... 'Teach your children well.' Oh, how do I juggle it all? I try to eat right, and I take Geritol (Much laughter!) I had another one then, didn't I? One more and I'll have three corks in a row...Let's see, how do I do it all...I eat plenty of sugar. It gives me energy! Well, Mexican too. That's a fuel source."

What does a Space Ghost read? "I would have to say *Blakeston's Medical Illustrated Dictionary*."

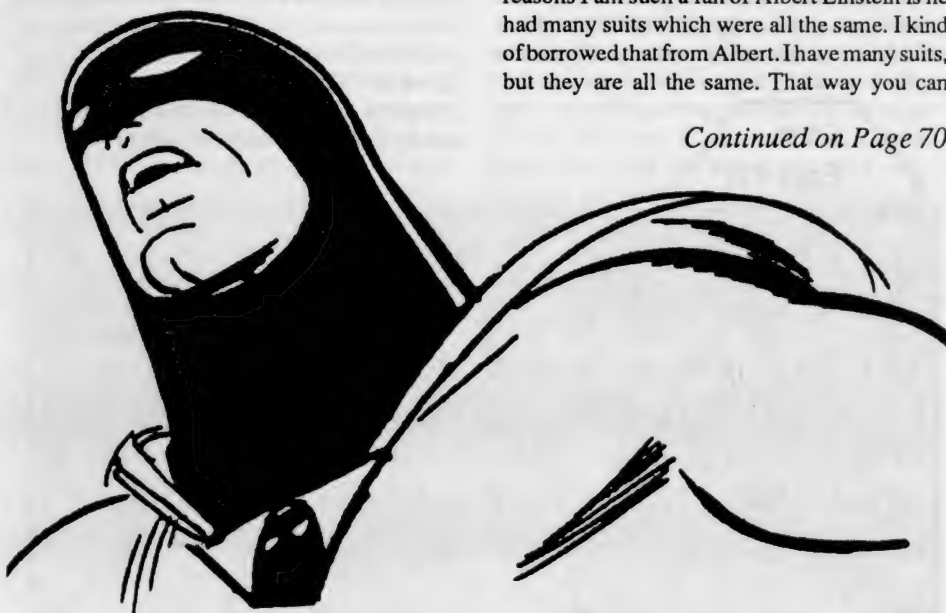
As a read?????

"Oh, of course," he offers enthusiastically, "if you go just through hernias alone there's an evening...All the way from Cerebral to Iguinal...You name it. Right on down the line."

Feeling just a little Barbara Walters-ish, I had to ask him one of those silly "If you were a tree" questions. If you were stranded on a desert planet and you had a power supply, a monitor, and a VCR, but only one movie or TV show, what would you want to watch? "Hmm, only one, any movie? Any TV show? Any workout tape? I would have to say the Cindy Crawford workout. I think that would probably do me."

Time was nearing an end and S.G. was scheduled to take off in the Phantom Cruiser, so I started wrapping this up. How many outfits does Space Ghost own? "One of the many reasons I am such a fan of Albert Einstein is he had many suits which were all the same. I kind of borrowed that from Albert. I have many suits, but they are all the same. That way you can

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Inside the Censor's Mind

Each television network has a Standards and Practices Office to police its programs including animation.

by Karl Cohen

It's no secret that some television shows try to titillate and shock to attract viewers. *NYPD* is famous for frontal nudity, Roseanne Arnold got lots of publicity when she kissed another woman and Bart Simpson was the first animated star to say "damn" and expose his behind on TV. The people behind-the-scenes who determine how far these shows can go are the Standards and Practices departments (S&P, also known as Broadcast Standards and Practices), a rarely mentioned area of the industry that plays an important role in the constant reshaping of American popular culture. Some of their decisions are intelligent and logical, while others tend to be absurd, stupid and even outrageous. They are the industry's judges and they have the power to ban creative works.

The power invested in S&P departments comes from rules that were established in 1952 in The TV Code of Standards of the National Association of Radio and Television Broadcasters (NARTB). These are regulations designed to safeguard the public against objectionable material. It is the responsibility of S&P to keep broadcasters out of trouble while letting producers of show come as close as possible to creating the kinds of entertainment they think their audiences want to see. It's S&P job to watch over every talk show, game show, situation comedy, drama, commercial and everything else on TV except live news stories.

Cable television networks have their own S&P departments even though it is deregulated and is not covered by the NARTB code of standards. A few of the cable networks are

liberal in what their S&P will permit to be shown. That is why the hot new innovative shows of the 1990's are often on MTV and Nickelodeon rather than on the three major broadcast networks, which have the most conservative S&P departments.

The following is a description of the nuts and bolts of S&P, what is being banned and/or cut, reasons why TV might become more conservative, and how you can help shape the future of TV. Dozens of people who have worked on various shows were interviewed as well as network S&P people who were not interested in talking openly to the press. Much of the material covered relates to animated shows which push the limits of acceptable taste on television. You may not want to watch these shows, but the information presented is clearly a microcosm of what S&P does throughout the industry.

The Simpsons, which premiered January, 1990 as a series, was the first prime-time animated show with writers who took risks and challenged the status quo. Next came *Ren and Stimpy* with its gross humor. It was followed by *Beavis and Butt-Head*, a really sick and twisted show. Two more shows that recently joined the list of programs that push the envelope are *The Critic* and *Duckman*.

BEAVIS & BUTT-HEAD AND THE S&P RULES

Although TV's rules of conduct are rather vague, and it is up to each network and local station to decide what is and is not acceptable, there is a bottom line. George Evelyn, a director at Colossal Pictures who has created half-hour shows for CBS and other networks, says "S & P is pretty relaxed... but there is a level of sex and violence they can't deal with."

Obscene words were never a S&P problem in pre-1990 cartoon shows as they avoided objectionable language. Now profanity is being used on *The Critic*, *Duckman* and other animated shows aimed at older kids and adults. The obvious four-letter words are not used, but other words are, and at least one group of words is handled in a peculiar way. The word "asshole" isn't acceptable, but it is okay to call a person an "ass" on TV. MTV lets Beavis and Butt-Head say "ass wipe" and "ass munch" on the air as alternative expressions.

MTV's S&P watches *Beavis and Butt-Head* very carefully. An assistant to the producer of the series who requested anonymity, says it is "very carefully regulated" even though it is known for pushing the limits of bad taste. The show's storyboards (a script that includes sketches of each scene) are sent to S&P for approval before the animators ever see the material. If something is questioned by S&P it can be changed, revised or simply removed. One common remedy at MTV and Nickelodeon is to make something in question "more cartoony." A staff member at Nickelodeon says "we live by that rule." Staff members at both networks have also been able to persuade S&P to approve some of the storyboard sequences that they had questioned.

The assistant to the producer of *Beavis and Butt-Head* wasn't comfortable talking about what is regulated, calling this a "sensitive area." Her boss, John Andrews, didn't respond to five

S&P Case #1:

George Liquor

S&P not only objected to the level of violence found in his *Ren and Stimpy* cartoons, but to his name, which sounded to some like a dirty joke. Can currently be found in Spumco limited edition cels, and the up-coming Spumco comic book.



or six phone requests to discuss the show he produces. What is known is that really rude and offensive material is cut along with clever word plays and other witty things that might make MTV's stars appear intelligent.

J.J. Sedelmaier, whose studio produced several episodes of *Beavis and Butt-Head* during its first season, says soundtrack and script problems were worked out ahead of time so he didn't have any problems with S&P. He was instructed not to show "the finger," but it was ok to show the first and last fingers up in the air in Air Guitar sequences.

Nudity is beginning to be included in animated shows like *Beavis and Butt-head* and *The Simpsons*. The most common image is an exposed male behind. Sedelmaier said he couldn't show a bare butt if the pants were down to the character's ankles, but it was ok to expose the butt if the pants were only pulled down to the bottom of the character's behind.

Tony Eastman, an animator who worked on the show with Sedelmaier, recalls being told to be careful not to show any genitals when he drew one of the stars getting a tatoo on his butt. He also recalls that when he draw an insane escaped killer with a knife he was told the weapon should not be held up in the air.

Spike Decker and the late Mike Gribble, who created the *Festival of Animation* and *Sick and Twisted Animation* packages for theatrical release across the US, produced the first Beavis and Butt-Head films with Mike Judge, the show's creator. When MTV purchased the rights to produce the series they also bought the existing films, *Frog Baseball* (1991) and *Love Peace and Understanding* (1992), and censored two images in the latter show. They used electronic technology to erase the giving of the finger in one scene and in another removed the name of the brand of glue being sniffed. It is ok to sniff glue on MTV, but it isn't ok to tell kids the stars use Testor's Glue!

MTV and other networks do not show acts of violence that a child could imitate. Although S&P at MTV is careful to enforce this rule, Beavis and Butt-Head were accused of showing kids overly violent acts twice in 1993 that may have been imitated by real humans. The first occurrence was when animal lovers claimed somebody blew up a cat in Santa Cruz, Ca. after seeing the boys perform this act on TV. MTV says the cat sequence never existed, and is not mentioned in published episode guides to the show. If it did exist it has been banned from TV. The rumor might have been based on an episode where B&B execute a grasshopper with a chainsaw after watching its squirm. In the process they cut one of their finger's down to the bone and watch it squirt blood. They describe their actions as "cool."

The second round of bad press came in 1993 when a five year-old boy in Ohio set a bed on fire killing his two year-old sister. Nobody

proved the kid had seen Beavis and Butt-Head play with fire on their show. It didn't matter. Critics demanded MTV do something before the show influenced a child to do a violent act. MTV responded by moving the program to a later hour when young children should be asleep.

MTV also responded to its critics by quietly withdrawing two episodes of *Beavis and Butt-Head* and cutting scenes in other programs. They no longer show the episode where the boys torture their friend Stewart. At one point, Stewart's parents kitchen is filled with stove gas. When it ignites, the room is destroyed. MTV ran a disclaimer when the show first aired that read "If you're not a cartoon, stove gas will kill you." This is probably the episode that comes closest to the news story that the show might have inspired a kid to set a bed on fire. There doesn't appear to be an episode where they actually set a bed on fire.

In the second banned episode the boys are hired by Mr. Anderson to paint his house. A major section of that episode dealt with their inhaling paint thinner which causes them to paint the behind of a cat and do other stupid things. MTV ran a disclaimer when the show aired that read "Breathing paint thinner will damage your brain. Look what it's done to Beavis and Butt-Head."

A show that has the boys learning Haiku poetry now has a scene cut from it. The scene showed Butt-Head igniting an aerosol spray and burning Beavis with it. Another scene cut from a show has one of the boys pulling the skin around his eyes towards his temples so he will look Asian.

It appears MTV's S&P has changed it's policy about possibly controversial images (including showing fire) and is now more cautious in what it permits to be aired. *Las Apassionadas* (1994), a live action video with electronic effects directed by Colossal Pictures' Tim Boxell, was one of the first victims of this change of policy. It is a black comedy made for MTV's *Liquid Television* (produced by Colossal) that stars Afro-European terrorists who are trying to save the world from bad art. When MTV reviewed the completed parody it sent Colossal 1 1/2 pages of changes that had to be made before the work could be aired. Boxell says that if everything requested was cut from his 7-minute work it would have become two incomprehensible minutes of material. He was asked to remove the showing of a gun in the opening title sequence, to avoid pointing a gun at somebody's head and so on (MTV suggested the weapon could be pointing in the general direction of the person). It is ironic that MTV still airs the violent *Aeon Flux* series on *Liquid Television* and *Beavis and Butt-Head* using a frog as a baseball. Boxell's work ended up being seen at film festivals. It won top prizes in San Francisco and Houston.

The attack on *Beavis and Butt-Head* for

possibly blowing up a cat might been directed at The Simpsons if it were not for the Fox Network's S&P department. Several months before Beavis and Butt-Head were accused of cruelty to animals the producers of *The Simpsons* were asked to cut a sequence in which a cat was going to be blown up.

David Silverman, a director on the series showed the pencil test for the scene at the Ojai Animation Festival in June, 1993. It was from an episode that has Bart and Lisa visiting the studio that animates *Itchy and Scratchy*, a violent cartoon series within the show. The kids go into a research lab where one of the show's writers is observing a "real" cat. He puts a stick of dynamite in its mouth to see what happens. Silverman said he was told that "you can't do that to a real cat on TV." A real cat? The scene was never fully rendered with ink and paint.

Fire is fast becoming a forbidden image. Jerry Beck, who worked on a new TV series of Baby Huey animated cartoons, was told by an executive that no images of fire should be included in the show. He assumed the rule was based on the Beavis and Butt-Head incident.

S&P IS OFTEN INCONSISTENT

S&P is by no means consistent in what they do. Both Linda Simensky, a producer at Nickelodeon and Owen Klatte, director of animation on *Things That Go Bump in the Night*, called S&P "very inconsistent" and they are often surprised at what S&P cuts or leaves in.

A hint at how arbitrary S&P can be is seen in the opening titles of the *Ren and Stimpy* show. The title sequence was made out of footage from *Big House Blues*, the pilot for the series. The opening includes a two-second clip from a scene missing from the show. The sequence shows Ren drinking or eating something from a toilet.

Some things that get cut are so obscure in meaning that producers have no idea if S&P made the right decision or not. Linda Simensky says the only censorship problem that has come up with the show *Rocko's Modern Life* on Nickelodeon was the use of the slang term "Johnson's Rod." According to S&P both words can refer to the male anatomy, while the writers of *Rocko* maintain the term is used by bikers to refer to a type of motorcycle. She believes the words were eventually cut just in case they might offend somebody.

Simensky notes that the rule of not showing a violent act that can be imitated by a child has an ironic twist to it. A cartoon character can do something just as dangerous or violent if it is clearly something a child can not do. For example it isn't ok for a clown to juggle knives, but it is ok to juggle chainsaws.

She also points out that S&P rules vary depending upon what hour something is to be shown. Shows with adult oriented material are

generally shown after 8 when young kids are supposed to be in bed. A parental discretion notice may accompany some programs both as a warning to parents with children and as a magnet that attracts viewers who are curious to find out why the notice was given.

Tony Eastman was surprised at the material that was acceptable when he worked on the series *Doug* for Nickelodeon. Two sequences that he thought would be cut were the showing of drops of blood when somebody cut their finger and using the slang expression "quit ragging me." Eastman doesn't recall *Doug* having any S&P problems.

Maria Elena Rodriguez, a producer in Los Angeles who worked on *The Simpsons* for two seasons says "The 'vague' nature of Broadcast Standards and Practice is something I've almost come to appreciate. It allows you a one-on-one relationship with whomever/whatever is doing the 'approving.' This makes it a more case-by-case judgment rather than a blanket 'shit list'... Most of the 'shit lists' I've ever had to work with were absolutely laughable." Another producer adds that if the S&P person "isn't smart, it's a frustrating, futile quest. If you're on a dumb show, the fight isn't worth it. You don't fight very hard then."

Arguments do occur. An individual who doesn't want to be identified was really irked a few years ago by a memo regarding flatulent sounds. They were told to remove the reference to the sound from the script. When this was challenged S&P said it was ok to substitute a burp. Later, when flatulence was again mentioned, S&P tried to bribe the individual by offering two burps for each fart cut from the sound track. The person also said "S&P has the power to wreck your show."

FORBIDDEN REN AND STIMPY IMAGES

Ren and Stimpy has had a rocky production history including cuts made to programs either

before they premiered or after people complained about specific scenes. In the episode *Powdered Toast Man* (8/92), considered by many viewers to be a fable about idiots getting control of our government, PTM burns the Constitution and Bill of Rights to keep warm in the White House. Several outraged people complained after the show was aired the first time. A censored version of the show was run on Nickelodeon until late in 1994 when they decided to run the uncensored version again.

In another Ren and Stimpy episode the last name of the character George Liquor was cut from the sound track before the show aired. Some fans insist that the cuts were made by a woman at Nickelodeon who thought the name was not a reference to alcohol. *The Village Voice* reported "Women hate that name because women think it means 'lick her.'" Nickelodeon officials deny this rumor, but they do not explain why the last name was cut out of the show.

In the episode *Sven Hoek*, Stimpy and Sven are sitting in a closet in Stimpy's cat litter box. Nickelodeon ends this scene with Stimpy closing the closet door. Originally the shot of the closed door lasted another 10 or 15 seconds as the characters played circus. They cut Stimpy saying "Look at me, I am a juggler." Sven said "and I am a bearded lady." Next Stimpy said "And I am a sword swallower," followed by swallowing sounds and giggles. If S&P ordered the cut it might be because they feared kids would try to swallow knives or would play with cat feces. Another possible reason for the cut is an obscure slang definition of "sword swallowing" - it can refer to fellatio.

There is also an unaired episode of the show. *Man's Best Friend* ends with a scene so violent that Nickelodeon has refused to show it. It shows Ren hitting George Liquor in the face several times with a boat oar. We see Liquor's face pushed way out of shape by the impact in slow motion. The scene was inspired by one in the feature *Raging Bull*. John Kricfalusi, creator of the series, says S&P and the administrators at

Nickelodeon approved every panel of the storyboard, but when the executives saw the finished project they shelved it claiming it was "too strong." After talking with Kricfalusi it appears decisions to censor shows after they air generally come from network producers and other top executives and not from S&P.

A FRANK TALK WITH A CENSOR

The head of S&P at KOFY-TV (Channel 20) in San Francisco, Paul Mular, and an assistant, watch everything before it is broadcast. It doesn't matter if the material has been shown on TV before, it must be inspected for objectionable material. They also indicate where breaks for commercials should occur, and they may cut material out of programs so the show fits perfectly into the allotted time slot.

The station only has a few formal guidelines about what they consider in bad taste. When a problem arises that isn't covered in the guidelines they trust Mular to make the correct decision. He sometimes leaves marginal images or words in a show and waits to see if anybody complains. He is instructed to take out objectionable slang words unless they are important to the plot's development. The four letter "F" and "S" words are always removed, as are most slang words referring to men and women. When Mular finds the unacceptable word "asshole" he generally cuts out the second part of the word so only "ass" can be heard. He says cable networks often leave these words in if the program is shown during adult viewing hours, and if they run a notice telling viewers that the show may contain objectionable language and/or images.

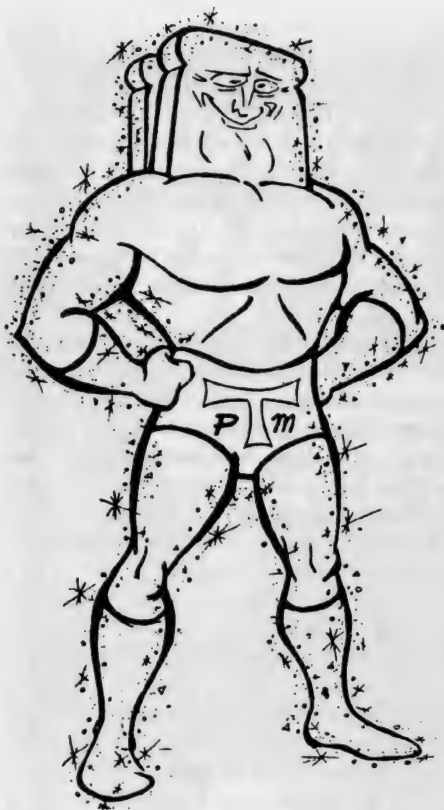
Once Mular got several complaints about an obscene word that people claimed they heard. He had actually cut it, but the lips moved and people thought they had heard it. He also recalled getting complaints when the station ran a parental guidance warning notice, but showed a censored print of *The Year of the Dragon*. People complained that the nude scenes and obscene words had been cut. He promised them that if the station showed the film again it would be an uncensored print.

S&P Case #2:

Popeye The Sailor

When revived for television during the Eighties by Hanna-Barbera, CBS instructed the writers that the one-eyed sailor couldn't hit anyone... not even Bluto!





**S&P
Case #3:**

Powdered Toast Man

This superhero parody set fire to the Bill of Rights and the Declaration of Independence in his Ren and Stimpy cartoon; a sequence which ran into censorship problems.

Recently he has experimented with a process that redubs offensive words at a lower volume so there is less emphasis on the words. NBC has used a different process that runs the word backwards. Mular says "they go by so quickly that they almost sound normal, but the words are gibberish."

Most TV stations have a policy of not showing racial stereotypes in cartoons or live action films. They either cut out offensive sequences or refuse to show the entire work if there is too much to cut. Most of the animated images cut are of African-Americans, and Asians in WWII era cartoons. Derogatory words referring to different races are also removed unless they are part of the context of the plot. For example, derogatory words might be left in a feature or documentary if it was necessary to demonstrate prejudice.

Mular believes objections to racial images in classic cartoons and other films from the past come and go in cycles. A series of complaints occurred in 1989 after the local media carried a story about Longs Drug Stores selling video tapes that included racially offensive cartoons. Shortly after the story broke Mular got calls about the cartoons KOFY-TV shows. One viewer objected to a MGM cartoon with a brown horse in it. Mular pointed out that the horse was in a race with blue, yellow, purple and other colored horses and that no racial reference was intended by the animators. As for the tapes, Longs and other stores pulled them from their shelves. Today, they are once again available. The Longs Drugs Store I visited

wasn't selling them, but another drug store chain carries them as do other retailers.

Mular's most recent cut to an animated show was in the opening of a made-for-TV series. Each show opens with a suggestion that kids watch with their talking Toby Terrier doll that depicts the star of the show. The station decided the mention of the toy was a subtle ad and against federal guidelines that demand advertising be separated from the program. The station felt they could be fined for running a brief mention of the toy in the show opening.

Other stations that carry this show may not cut the opening, but Mular defends his station's decision to cut it. He says it is not uncommon for local censors to play it safe by making cuts to new shows. NBC executives have even ordered cuts in *Saturday Night Live* after it has aired on the East Coast, but before it airs three hours later on the West Coast. Linda Simensky says Nickelodeon and MTV have also prevented people on the West Coast from hearing offensive words that got broadcast on the East Coast by mistake. When this happens the engineer lowers the sound at the correct moment. Later the tape will be censored so the incident doesn't happen again.

HOW A NETWORK BS&P DEPARTMENT WORKS WITH PRODUCERS

Ken Pontac, co-creator and co-producer of *Bump In The Night* at Danger Productions, says there appears to be tremendous pressure on the networks to single-handedly correct all the problems of society including bad parenting and bad schools. This pressure has resulted in his having a thick file of letters from ABC's BS&P department on his desk concerning changes in the show. Although Danger Productions self-censors their scripts and does their best to avoid the many things they can't do on the show, BS&P does spot things that Pontac was not aware of.

Pontac says BS&P has spotted word plays with hidden meanings in scripts that he wrote that he didn't know were there. They also watch closely for "dangerous and imitable" acts and "interpersonal violence." One character shaking or another is an example of interpersonal violence. Although the action in the show might be very subtle, it could be imitated by a kid resulting in a young child being shaken too hard and ending up with damage to its head or brain.

The network's BS&P department has influenced the look of the show. They asked Danger Productions to develop an ethnic balance among the doll characters and not to show certain disgusting things for fear food sponsors would be offended. They asked that when the audience views the images a robot toy sees that no crosshairs or other markings appear that might indicate the robot is equipped with a guidance system for weapons. They also told Danger Productions that Squishy, a character that lives in a toilet tank, could be any color except brown. Squishy was made blue after the color of liquids frequently used in TV ads to demonstrate the absorbency of diapers and other paper products.

ABC is quite thorough in their inspection of work being made for the network. *Bump In The Night* has to be approved by network executives and BS&P at almost every level of production. They approve the one page premise for each episode, the script outline, the script, the storyboard and finally a roughcut of the picture with a temporary sound mix. The roughcut and mix often become the final product unless the network asks for changes.

MAKING TV ANIMATION FOR KIDS A POSITIVE EXPERIENCE

While S&P regulates what we see on a daily basis, broad decisions about the overall content of TV are made by television's top executives. The biggest changes in TV animation have been in shows aimed at children. For many

Mighty Mouse

Ralph Bakshi's revival of the Terrytoons star had a run-in with critics when some people thought a cocaine-snorting reference had been worked into a cartoon. In reality, MM had enjoyed the aroma of a flower.

years, public groups have demanded that Congress enact laws that better regulate TV, especially programs aimed at kids. Their work has resulted in the end of many traditional forms of animated violence.

Late in 1993, DIC Entertainment, the creators of numerous animated TV series including *Captain Planet*, *Dennis the Menace* and *Sonic, the Hedgehog*, announced a 12-point code of standards to guide writers and directors who work for the company. This is essentially a form of self-censorship. DIC's shows stress storylines that enhance self-esteem and foster cooperative behavior, the resolution of conflicts through dialogue, negotiation and mediation, and showing antisocial behavior as being unglamorous and unacceptable. DIC's star *Captain Planet* was an environmentalist before it became fashionable.

Another recent development is having child psychologists review projects before they go into production. A producer who didn't want to be identified, mentioned their experience with a network psychologist when a project was being considered said the psychologist "is quite thorough, she puts our characters on the couch." The person indicated it was a humiliating experience to go through.

While these and other changes are considered positive steps that improve the wholesomeness of children's TV, there are adult fans who miss the kinds of shows they saw as kids that are no longer being shown. Some fans think the recent changes in kid's shows is just a first step in changing television. They suspect pressure groups will eventually force producers to change the nature of prime-time animated shows made for adults. They note that classic cartoons are already being cut for violence by the networks. (KOFY-TV in the Bay Area has never cut a violent sequence in a cartoon, but they do cut violent and gruesome close-ups in live action features.) Some cartoon fans worry that kids growing up in future will not be able to

experience the violent humor of a Roadrunner or Tex Avery cartoon on television. Home video and laser disc publishers are also beginning to released censored cartoon classics.

There is yet another form of outside pressure on the horizon that may soon influence the content of animation made for TV. As TV networks go global there will probably be pressure on the creators of shows to avoid visual gags and social satire that will not make sense in a foreign country. For example one type of gag that will not be funny in a non-English speaking country is one dependent on the audience reading something in English (a sign, label on a jar, etc.). Showing typical American habits and customs may get cut in some countries just as American TV has cut scenes of people talking while eating with chopsticks. In Islamic countries there are several words that are in common use in the West that can not be broadcast. Words such as "glorious" and "wonderful" are qualities of their deity and can not be used to describe mortals or products being sold on TV. MTV is aware of these issues as more than half of their viewers live in foreign countries. The Cartoon Network, TNT and other cable networks are also expanding abroad, so it is probably only a matter of time before the foreign market begins to influence *Beavis and Butt-Head* or another show.

WILL TV BECOME MORE CONSERVATIVE IN WHAT IT SHOWS?

The content of TV is controlled to some extent by the public. Television and advertising executives pay attention to public criticism of the medium, and most would rather play it safe rather than risk problems. One of the industry's fears is that disgruntled viewers will organize a boycott of products advertised on a show they hate and that the sponsors will then pull their ads from the show/station being boycotted. Viewers can also threaten to drop their subscriptions to cable TV services and/or ask

their local cable company to drop the cable network they dislike. Other concerns are that complaints to the FCC can result in stations being fined (Howard Stern has cost radio stations millions in lawyer fees and FCC fines due to his outrageous behavior), or that complaints could cause the owners of broadcast stations to lose their operating licenses. Yet another cause for concern is the possibility that Congress might enact legislation that would affect the content of TV.

There have been cases where changes in animation were made due to organized public outcries. The most famous occurred in 1988 when CBS cut 3 1/2 seconds from a *Mighty Mouse: The New Adventures* program that showed the star inhaling the aromas of flowers (according to CBS), or sniffing cocaine (according to the Rev. Donald Wildmon and his American Family Association).

Another protest was organized by the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, which protested alleged racial slurs against Arabs in a song in Disney's *Aladdin* in 1993. The studio eventually agreed to make minor changes in the song before the home video was released to the public.

In another incident Dick Zimmerman, a disc jockey who won \$9.76 million in the California State Lottery (1988), announced a crusade against *Beavis and Butt-head* in 1993 after they allegedly blew up a cat. Zimmerman told the press he had received thousands of phone calls of support and that he was going to organize a group against violence on TV. He said the group might organize boycotts against sponsors of violent programming.

Lorri O'Grady, who buys air time from TV networks and local stations for advertisers, say many sponsors pay attention to letters from the public. Once she was instructed to pull ads from a TV show because a sponsor panicked over a single letter threatening a boycott of their product. The sponsor believed the complaint represented the opinions of thousands of people. O'Grady insists the sponsor panicked because she saw the episode of the show in question and found nothing objectionable in it. She says the letter of complaint was by a "crazed person" and that the alleged offense wasn't in the show. She adds that "the trend towards making TV politically correct has become ridiculous," and it might eventually result in a situation so bad that "all you will be able to see on TV is show openings, closing credits and test patterns."

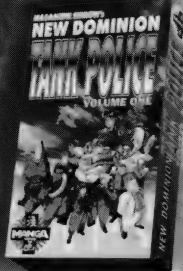
How ridiculous will it get? In 1993, a group claiming to represent people with stuttering problems and speech impediments spoke out against Elmer Fudd and Porky Pig's pronunciation of words. They stated that the people they represented found these voices offensive. While the news item may have been a hoax or a poignant joke, it is also possible the group exists and will get what it wants. It may

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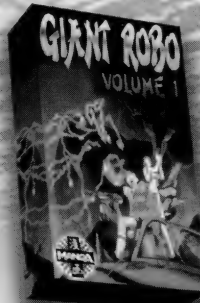
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**You have 223,200 minutes.
Pick up your pencil and begin.**



Announcing the Third Annual Hanna-Barbera Storyboard Contest.

So, how could you make the most of 223,200 minutes (that's 3,720 hours, 155 days, or 5 months)? Do you think you have what it takes to create a whole new life form? Well, if you enter our Third Annual Storyboard Contest, you just might create a living, breathing cartoon with a life all its own. And a whole new way of life for you. We're looking for raw cartoon talent and we know it's out there. This is no grade school test. This is the chance of a life-time. So hurry up and read the rules and regulations below. And remember, use your time wisely.



OFFICIAL RULES

1. Here's What It's Gotta Be

The conceptual storyboard must communicate your cartoon in 51 panels or less, which is 17 or fewer pages. Entrants must use the Official Storyboard Template, 8 1/2" x 14". You may photocopy the provided sample for additional pages. The storyboard may be in black & white or color.

2. No Stone Age Families

The concept and characters must be original and the entrants must be the creator of the storyboard.

3. It's Gotta Be Funny, Hip Or Outrageous

All entries will be judged on the following criteria:

- Originality of Concept
- Character Development
- Humor

4. It Doesn't Have To Be Pretty

Because the storyboards will be evaluated on the above criteria only, and not on technical execution, it is recommended, but not required, that support materials accompany the storyboard (3 pages total to include a written synopsis and/or character designs & backgrounds. All included material must also be 8 1/2" x 14").

5. Your Board Will Be Seen By Hollywood

Hot Shots

Judges will be selected by Hanna-Barbera from the animation, television and motion picture industries (which may include animation gurus, directors, art & film school people, television executives, agents and other creative professionals).

6. Win "Big" Money

The independent jury will select 30 storyboards for final competition. The 10 winners will be chosen from the 30 finalists by the jury and the Sponsors, the decisions of which shall be final and binding. The winners will be awarded the following prizes:

Grand Prize:	\$5,000
First Runner-Up	\$3,000
Second Runner-Up	\$1,500
Seven Honorable Mentions:	Limited Edition Cels (valued at \$700 each)

7. Don't Delay

Entries must be received by 6pm on September 15, 1995. All entries must be submitted to Animation Magazine, the Official Contest Facilitator. Mail your storyboard with a completed entry form to:

Animation Magazine
Hanna-Barbera Storyboard Contest
28024 Dorothy Drive
Agoura Hills, CA 91301

If your questions have not been answered, please call 1-800-515-TOON.

Boards will not be returned. The Sponsors are not responsible for lost, damaged, or misdirected storyboards. Please retain a copy for yourselves.

8. If You're Related To Us, Forget It

The competition is open to animators eighteen (18) or older throughout the U.S. and Canada who submit a completed entry form and a storyboard in accordance with the Official Rules, except employees and their immediate families of Hanna-Barbera, Inc., Turner Broadcasting System, Inc. and Animation Magazine and their parent, affiliate and subsidiary companies.

9. Pull A Few All-Nighters, And Send Us More Than One

There is no limit to the number of entries per person, but each entrant will be eligible for no more than one prize. Each board must be submitted under separate cover, each accompanied by a completed entry form. (For additional entry forms, photocopy this one.)

10. We'll Let You Know

Winners will be notified the week of October 16, 1995. All other entrants will receive notification by mail after November 11, 1995, along with a list of winners.

11. Other Legal Poop

Void where prohibited by law. No purchase necessary. All interpretations of the rules by the Sponsors are final and binding. Prizes are non-transferable. By submitting an entry to the contest, entrants agree to abide by official rules and regulations. Winners will be required to sign an affidavit of eligibility and a release granting the Sponsors the right to use their name, voice, likeness and entry for purposes of promotion and advertising on behalf of the Sponsors, without any additional compensation. The Sponsors reserve full right and power to edit, translate, dub or alter the materials.

OFFICIAL ENTRY FORM

SUBMISSION RELEASE:

Much of material that is now being submitted in the Storyboard Contest embodies materials, suggestions or ideas substantially similar to those that may have been previously developed by the Sponsors. Further, the Sponsors may begin using material similar to an entrant's which the Sponsors may have received or will receive after the date of an entrant's submission. Because of this, we must require an entrant's consent to the following terms with respect to any material, ideas, proposals, literary materials, videos and musical compositions submitted into the Hanna-Barbera Storyboard Contest by entrants: (i) you confirm that you have read the foregoing policy concerning the acceptance of your materials, and accept the terms of the Official Rules and this Submission Release; (ii) neither the submission of your materials, nor anything in this release shall be deemed to limit or restrict the rights of the Sponsors to use, nor prohibit the Sponsors from using, without obligation to entrant, materials submitted to, acquired or created by the Sponsors prior to, after, or independently of entrant's submission(s), and materials not otherwise protected by the copyright laws of the United States, including, without limitation, the unprotected elements of the storyboard(s) submitted by entrant; (iii) you release the Sponsors and their parent, subsidiary or affiliate companies from all claims and liabilities with respect to their use of any such similar or identical material; and (iv) you release the Sponsors from liability for loss or damage to the materials you submitted and understand that they are not obligated to return such materials to you.

ENTRANT'S WARRANTIES:

Each entrant represents and warrants that the materials submitted by such entrant shall be free and clear from all claims of third parties and that no part of the material submitted, nor the exercise by the Sponsors of any rights granted hereunder will violate or infringe upon the trademark, trade name, copyright, right of privacy, property rights or any other right of any party. Each entrant agrees to indemnify and

hold the Sponsors harmless from any and against any claim, loss, liability or cost of any person, firm or corporation including reasonable legal fees, arising out of any breach of any warranty, representation or undertaking made by each entrant in these Rules.

FIRST NEGOTIATION:

By entering this contest, you do not lose the right to your storyboard; however, upon acceptance of a prize, each winner agrees to negotiate in good faith solely with Hanna-Barbera regarding the acquisition of audiovisual and ancillary rights in and to the storyboard. This period of negotiation begins on the date the winner receives the prize and continues for 120 days.

I have fully read and understand and agree to the terms and conditions contained in the Official Rules, the Submission Release, the Entrant's Warranties, and the First Negotiation's provision.

Print Entrant Name

Print Second Entrant Name (if applicable)

Signature(s)

Date

Address

Date of Birth

Day Phone

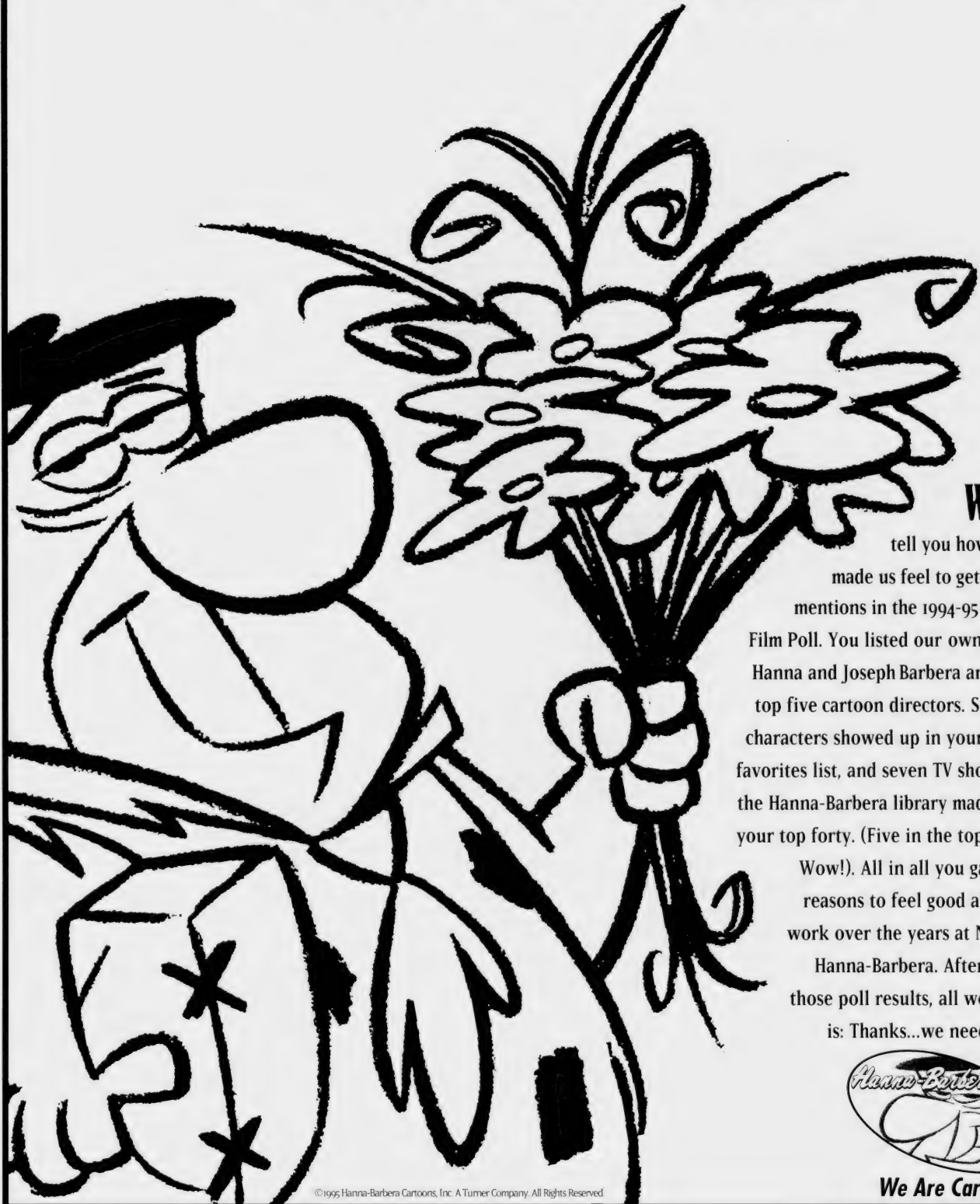
Evening Phone

Title of Submission



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Thanks Animato Readers. We Love You, too!



We can't tell you how good it made us feel to get so many mentions in the 1994-95 Animato Film Poll. You listed our own William Hanna and Joseph Barbera among the top five cartoon directors. Six of our characters showed up in your all time favorites list, and seven TV shows from the Hanna-Barbera library made it into your top forty. (Five in the top twenty. Wow!). All in all you gave us 22 reasons to feel good about our work over the years at MGM and Hanna-Barbera. After reading those poll results, all we can say is: Thanks...we needed that!



We Are Cartoons!™

not be too long before the original voice tracks of Porky and Elmer are replaced.

Not all protests demanding changes are successful. Linda Simensky of Nickelodeon says that for a brief period in 1993 they received numerous complaints from members of a religious group that *Ren and Stimpy* and *Rocko's ModernLife* were too adult-oriented to be shown to kids on Sunday mornings. They wanted the shows moved to a different time slot. The network was polite, but did not make the programming change. Somebody pointed out that if they were good Christians, they would be in church when the shows aired. They probably never saw the shows they were complaining about.

S&P is a complicated issue for networks and independent stations that want to attract attention by showing material that can shock some people. The department has to make responsible decisions that will keep the station out of trouble and keep the public entertained at the same time. S&P at MTV, Nickelodeon and Fox should be congratulated for the risks they take. This is not a censorship versus free speech issue. S&P makes their decisions in the interest of the people who are paying for the show before the show airs. Censorship doesn't occur until after the show airs, and people complain about something S&P permitted to be aired. According to one producer "S&P doesn't make my job any easier;" however, it must be remembered TV is first and foremost a business. It has the right to control what it does to make money. Making changes in a program while it is in production is their right.

YOU CAN HAVE A VOICE IN SHAPING THE FUTURE OF TV

When did you last call or write a TV station or network and thank them for presenting a program you liked, or told them off about something that you hated? It doesn't take much time or effort to send them your comments, and believe it or not they pay attention to the positive calls and letters as well as to the negative ones. They may not do as you say, but if enough people share your opinions and contact them gradual changes may occur.

In 1993, I was asked to program an animation show for the *The Living Room Festival* (aired on KQED in 1994). At the end of the show the station ran a phone number soliciting viewers' comments. It turns out the station makes notes on what the callers have to say and pass them on to the station's management and producers of programs. These comments influence programmers and producers.

At KOFY-TV in San Francisco the station's owner and his program department read everything that is mailed to them and/or forward letters to sponsors, stars and or syndicators. In the fall, when they are planning new programs they get 50 to 200 letters a week, while at other

times of the year the flow of letters is less. KOFY-TV is like other local stations which welcomes your input. Management doesn't want to rely completely on polls and information from sponsors to judge if their shows and ads are successful.

At Nickelodeon there is a viewer hotline that serves many purposes from providing information about merchandise and tours of the studio to giving irate viewers a way to vent their frustrations over program changes. Carol Cate, who monitors the hotline and letters sent to the network, says your responses can make a difference. All calls and letters about inappropriate language are given prompt attention. Cate says some viewers report things they think they heard that were not there, but Nickelodeon takes no chances and inspects everything. There was also "a family that saw an inappropriate symbol flashed in a show." The show was inspected and edited as a result of the call.

Comments about shows are sent to the network's producers as they give some idea about how people feel about their programs. The network keeps records of what people are asking for. They count requests for what people want to see again and what old shows people would like to see on Nick At Night. What is shown on the channel is based a great deal on the opinions of viewers.

There are loyal TV watchers that enjoy communicating with the channel. In 1993 they ran a promotion that was far more successful than they expected. They asked kids to send in a picture of their favorite Nickelodeon stars. They were amazed that 80,000 pictures were mailed in. About 5000 were shown over the air. Cate also mentioned that there are a group of "hawks" that watch their favorite shows every time they are on the air. When the station doesn't show them in the right order they call the hotline. She says "usually the same fans call us over and over."

Cate says that "sometimes you get hundreds and hundreds of letters, and it doesn't make a difference. Then one letter comes in and it makes an immediate difference." When Nick began to show a series of short vignettes in the summer of 1994 that starred Stick Stickley, a character made from a popsicle stick, kids went nuts over him. One girl wrote a letter that charmed the Nick staff. She had invented Sally Stick as a friend for Stick Stickley. The letter resulted in a segment being developed where Stick actually called the girl and talked to her about her imaginary friend Sally.

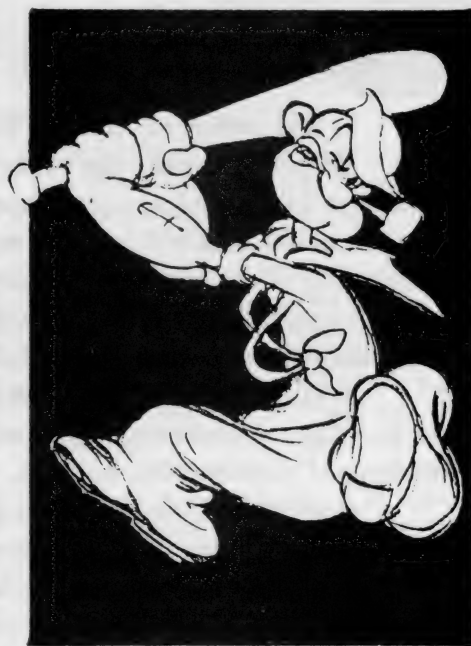
When the Stick Stickley series ended as scheduled, the network started to get calls and letters asking for more segments with the star. Originally Nick had no plans to bring him back, but the audience response changed their minds and kids will be happy to know Stick Stickley is presently on vacation and will be back. Cate

says that in this case "the responses from kids did make a big difference."

Probably the most impressive story about a fan letter to an animated show is John Kricfalusi's reaction to the first letter sent to him regarding *The Ren and Stimpy Show*. Two days after the first program aired on Nickelodeon (8/91) the studio received a letter from a fan named Anthony. In the letter he invited Ren and Stimpy to visit him the next time they were in America. Kricfalusi's response was amazing. He not only invited Anthony to visit him in Hollywood for a grand tour that included a day at Disneyland, the letter also inspired him to develop a script for the episode *Visit to Anthony*. Kricfalusi recorded the soundtrack for the show using Anthony's voice for the part of the boy. He also had publicity photos made of the new star.

If you have an idea or suggestion about what you are or are not seeing on television, write or call you local station. Ask friends to do the same thing. Respond to what you think is acceptable or unacceptable.

Karl Cohen is presently looking for a publisher for his proposed book *Forbidden Animation: Censored Cartoons and Blacklisted Animators* (he continues to search for censorship stories, drop him a note at PO Box 14516, SF CA 94114 if you have any stories or comments). He is president of ASIFA-SF, the Bay Area's Animation Association and teaches animation history and contemporary animation at San Francisco State University.



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Summer 95: Animation Fans Strike It Rich



Summertime may mean anything but work or tension to millions of Americans, but for those in the film industry, the summer movie season is the biggest dice roll of the year. Dozens of films are released, and each production hopes to be able to find its audience and sustain a healthy stay at first-run theaters.

In this section of **ANIMATO!**, we'll take a look at some of this summer's animated offerings.

Casper is already one of the biggest hits of the season. The live-action adaptation of the cartoon character has racked up some impressive numbers at the box office, despite wishy-washy reviews. The success of the film will help the new television cartoons that will be produced by Universal, and the continuing effort by the new owners of the character to re-establish it as a children's favorite. Lost in the current hoopla is how this character came about, and to find out the truth about Casper's origins, **ANIMATO!** spoke to Casper's father, Seymour Reit.

While the verdict is not yet in on whether Disney's largest stylistic gamble since *Fantasia* is going to be a financial success, many people have been fascinated by *Pocahontas*. Mike Lyons looks at the making of this historical musical.

Computer animation plays a key role in *The Mighty Morphin Power Rangers - The Movie*. The men-in-suits approach to giant monsters of the television series has been replaced with cutting edge animation. Judith Reboy gets the low-down from the film's director.

Everybody's favorite clay-boy, Gumby, makes his feature film debut also this summer. Art Clokey talked to **ANIMATO!** about his clay character and his trip to the big screen. **GMD**



Disney's History Lesson

Pocahontas may be the biggest artistic challenge for Disney since *Fantasia*

by Mike Lyons

The Disney studio's 33rd animated feature, *Pocahontas*, the latest addition to the studio's "Second Golden Age" of animation, actually began life as a home-made poster. When he was "pitching" the film to the studio execs, *Pocahontas*' co-director, Mike Gabriel fashioned a mock movie poster "one sheet", using the Indian princess, Tiger Lily from *Peter Pan*. "Basically, I just didn't want to bore them," jokes Gabriel. "Some people get up there and do a ten minute story outline that's just boring as hell. So, I figured I had faith in the title, and if the title hooks 'em, they'll ask questions and they'll get information that way. So, it seemed to work, even with that Tiger Lily rip-off."

Pocahontas has come a long way from that little "rip-off" to become one of the most ambitious and authentic films the Disney studio has ever produced. Part of the reason for this is the painstaking attention to detail lavished on the film during its pre-production stages. *Pocahontas*' other co-director, Eric Goldberg, (who makes his directorial debut, after serving as supervising animator for the Genie in *Aladdin*), says, "We really wanted to present certain things in this film as interesting to our audience. It would have been very easy for us to make a film about American Indians that included teepees, totem poles and big, long, feathery headdresses, the way most people are used to seeing those images from Southwest American Indians. But, we didn't want to do that."

Instead, the filmmakers made numerous trips to Virginia, in order to soak up the atmosphere. "We met with Native Americans and surviving members of the Powhatan nation," Goldberg says. "We spoke to them and kind of got a flavor of what they were like, what they found important. They found a sense of community very important and they wanted to see that portrayed in the film."

The research helped steep *Pocahontas* in authenticity and give the film a unique look, which according to Eric Goldberg, created a real challenge for the studio's clean-up artists. "The design of the film, the design of the characters, the design of the backgrounds and



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the general tone of the movie is completely unforgiving," he says. "The design itself is very crisp, there aren't a lot of round edges and circles and things that are squashy and stretchy, that you have a lot of cartoon liberty with. So, it means that every little nick and pop in the animation, that's a mistake, will show. It really is a daunting thing, this task we set for everybody."

In addition to this "clean" look, *Pocahontas* also took on a different mood in the pre-production stages. "These films really have to find their own tone and their own style," notes Mike Gabriel. "Early on, the more we got into the story telling, it just became obvious that we had some very deep issues and intense themes to get across. We weren't going to be going real far in the 'yuks' direction."

Because of this, Glen Keane, who animates the film's title character, had a certain weight on his shoulders. "I felt like I wanted to make sure that I was going to give myself every chance I

could to come up with as historically accurate a view of Pocahontas as I could." Keane, who has created some memorable recent Disney characters, (including *Aladdin*, the Beast and Ariel), was also given a tremendous assignment by Jeffrey Katzenberg, when designing *Pocahontas*. "Jeffrey's mandate at the beginning of this picture was, 'I want you to design her to be the finest creature the human race has to offer'," remembers Glen. "I said, 'Oh...okay. When do you want that? Tomorrow?'"

This "finest creature's" story became the first Disney animated feature to be based on historical events. Set in Virginia in 1607, *Pocahontas* centers on a young, strong-willed, Native American woman and her encounters with British soldier John Smith. According to Keane, Pocahontas is definitely unlike any other Disney heroines, "It seems that in so many of the scenes of *Pocahontas* that I animated, she's really not doing a whole heck of a lot. She's not running around, she's not talking a lot, she's not



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making faces, she's standing there and she's looking, but she's not just looking, she sees." Glen also adds that a great deal of Pocahontas' "acting" is internalized, "So much of it is this invisible calling, this thing that's inside of her that's making her follow this course throughout the whole film."

The backdrop for Pocahontas' story, is the clash that occurs between the Native Americans, led by Chief Powhatan, and the British settlers, led by the greedy John Ratcliffe. Like Pocahontas, these two characters also deal with an internal struggle. Ruben Aquino, the supervising animator for Chief Powhatan says, "When I was animating him, I wanted to emphasize the two sides of him. One side being the chief side of him, the strong leader that everyone looked up to. He was kind to his people, but also perfectly willing to resort to warfare if he had to. Then, there is the other side of him that is the fatherly, warm, kind, gentle side of him that we see more of when he's with Pocahontas."

Even the film's villain, Ratcliffe displays similar depth. "He reveals his Achilles heel, or his weak side," says Mike Gabriel. "He's almost sympathetic in a way. He's been laughed at in court, he's sort of been the black sheep in King James' court, so he has to prove himself, he wants to have one last chance to prove he's

as good as anybody."

Rounding out the cast is the usual assortment of eclectic supporting characters; Flit, the hummingbird and Meeko the raccoon, serve as Pocahontas' sidekicks. Grandmother Willow, the mystical spirit who resides in a tree gives Pocahontas her guidance and wisdom. Along for the ride with Ratcliffe is Percy, his spoiled pet pooch, Ben and Lon, two dim-witted settlers and Thomas, John Smith's devoted friend.

Disney has also assembled a cast of tremendous talent for *Pocahontas*. "We have some terrific voices in the film," admits Eric Goldberg. "We have Mel Gibson as John Smith, Irene Bedard for speaking and Judy Kuhn for singing as Pocahontas, Linda Hunt for Grandmother Willow and David Odgen Stiers as Ratcliffe. All of them make a huge, huge contribution to the way that the characters are perceived."

According to Glen Keane, this is especially true of the title character, "Judy Kuhn was the first voice we had. She had this quality to her voice that gave this depth to the way she sang. It wasn't the same as Jody Benson singing Ariel's part, which was a much brighter, younger kind of sound. Judy gave a more mature performance. We needed that kind of voice for the acting, and that's the quality that Irene gave. There was a maturity and a confidence in the

way that her voice reads."

To complement the voices, Disney brought back Academy Award winning composer Alan Menken, (*Beauty and the Beast*, *Aladdin*) and teamed him up with lyricist Stephen Schwartz. "Stephen puts a great deal of heart and soul into his lyrics," says Goldberg. "He's got a lot of passion for what he does and he feels very strongly that the songs should help propel the plot and get you to the next level of where the story has to be, rather than just being an isolated show stopper." Because of this, the film's seven songs are weaved more heavily into the story line than in other Disney features. "It's interesting, because they put 'Colors of the Wind' out as a trailer prior to the movie's release," adds Goldberg. "I think when you see the movie you'll realize how it fits very well within its context. It works fine as a trailer, but it works much better not in isolation. It's better in the context of the movie, as you see how their [Pocahontas and John Smith] relationship is developing."

In the initial days of production, it was this song that actually helped establish the message that the filmmakers wanted to convey with *Pocahontas*. Mike Gabriel says, "After the first song, 'Colors of the

Wind' was written, we came up with a more grandiose theme, which was, we must all learn to live together in harmony, or we will destroy ourselves. To me, it's as simple as, our similarities are much greater than our differences. Even though we like to rant and rave that we're all completely different and each nation and each culture has its own idiosyncrasies and separate ids, I think what we show in the movie is that we're not all that different. We do a lot of shadow play in the film, visually, which, to me, shows that the shadow is more truth than the form casting it."

In addition to its more mature theme, *Pocahontas* also promises to push the animation envelope. "We were trying to communicate our acting in much more subtle ways, which usually you don't do, except in live action," says Glen Keane, who also adds, "This has really moved us to ground that was forbidden before for animators: You don't try to do those subtle things because the audience won't read it, they won't be able to see it. You have to go with exaggerated expressions, that's what animation is made for, exaggeration. But, I've never believed that. I've always felt that animation is an art form, and just like the subtle smile on the Mona Lisa, it's not just reserved for that painting,

Continued on Page 71



The Clayboy Makes It to the Big Screen

Gumby's feature film is set to debut this summer

by G. Michael Dobbs

He's lean, green and, now, is going to be a star on the movie screen. Art Clokey's Gumby has been a staple on television since the character's debut in 1956 on the *Howdy Doody Show*. Now, the clay-animated character is on his way to theaters for the first time in *Gumby: The Movie*.

The movie's release capitalizes on Gumby's newest success in television, a show on Nickelodeon featuring both older episodes and ones produced in the mid-Eighties.

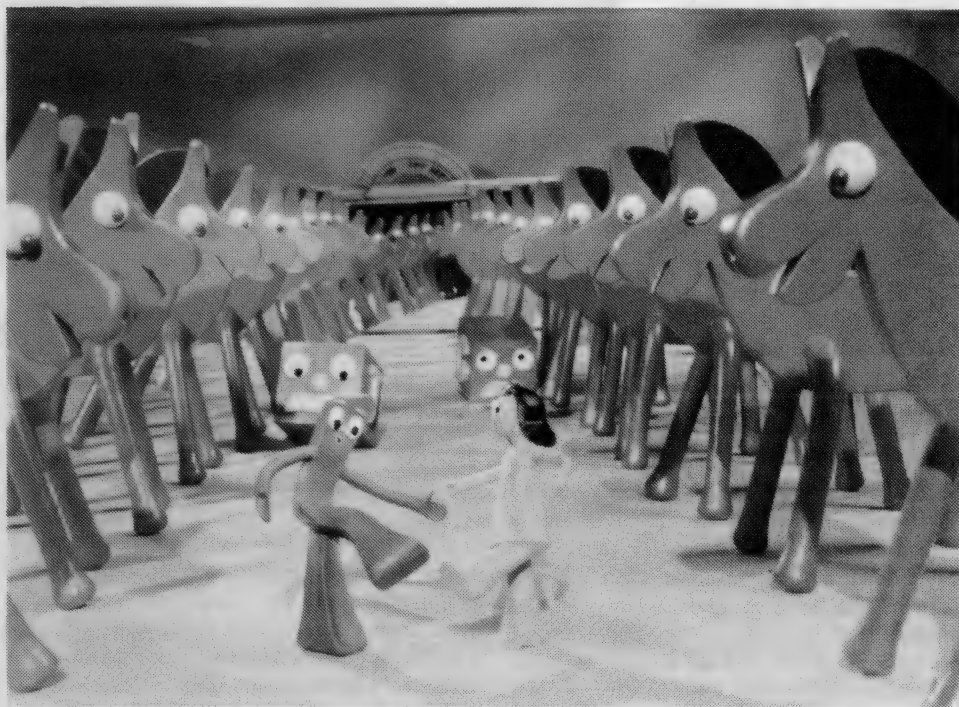
"Years ago, they thought Gumby had had it. It would just come and go like fads. Fortunately, we got a chance to make a new series back in 1986 and '87. They combine that with the old ones on the present Nickelodeon show" explained Clokey. The Nickelodeon show has received solid ratings from both new and older fans.

Indeed, Gumby has maintained his place in the American pop culture for almost 40 years. The original episodes were widely syndicated after their network run, and then enjoyed distribution on home video. Gumby merchandising has almost been a constant in the marketplace for years. Clokey, more than any other animator, has popularized the medium of clay animation.

Clokey who had wanted to produce a feature, took the profits from the television deal to underwrite the feature which he and his wife Gloria produced in their Marin County, CA studio.

"We did the movie in 1988, '89 and '91. We just finished some of the post-production a few months ago," said Clokey. Since the Clokeys were financing the feature themselves, Clokey reported with pleasure that they could work "like humans" on the film with a schedule of 8 hour days, instead of the 14 hours demanded by the new television work.

The movie was a family affair with Art Clokey co-writing, directing, and storyboarding the film while his wife Gloria also co-wrote the script, did the set breakdowns and wrote some of the songs. Art performed three voices, including that of Pokey, while Gloria was the voice for Goo, one of Gumby's friends.



In a musical number from *Gumby - The Movie*, Gumby dances with his girlfriend Tara

Those looking for another animated musical fairy tale will be disappointed. *Gumby: The Movie* is indeed animated, and has music, but follows the style long established by Clokey. As anyone who has watched Gumby can tell you, Gumby is...well...different than other animated characters. Clokey's sense of the abstract and surreal and his strong religious and moral beliefs produce a singularly individual animated film.

In this case, when was the last time you saw an animated film in which cloning, rock'n'roll and low interest loans were key plot points?

Producing the new television episodes provided the Clokeys with a way to find the talent necessary for a feature film.

"We were able to train animators on the new series we did in 1986-88. We had 18 animators. We found them from all over the country and trained them," explained Clokey. "That's why the new series is uneven in its quality. Some episodes have good animation and some don't. Lorimar [the company] who was financing the series wanted to have it done in 18 months. Well, we did it in 20 months. If you realize the 99 episodes we did was equal to 6 to 8 features film, you see we couldn't be very perfectionistic in our shooting."

The feature film was made under different conditions.

"We picked out some of the best animators to do the movie after we did the series. We had all the equipment, studio, and artists and so on to do the movie. The first version was completed in 1992, and since then we've made changes and the last changes were made about six months ago. We improved the soundtrack and got a new composer, and did some editing and so on. We added a song over the end credits so people won't want to get up out of their seats."

Gumby - The Movie is an independent production which is being released by a small New York-based distributor, Arrow Releasing, Inc. Clokey could have gone with a larger distributor, but decided against it.

"Warner Brothers and Universal both registered some interest in distributing it. Warner Brothers wanted to put Eddie Murphy in it, and Universal wanted to change the script too much. So we passed them by and decided to do it ourselves."

In this time of computer-generated animation, Gumby is comfortably and reassuringly low-tech in many ways. Gumby and his co-stars are still wire-reinforced models made of the clay-like modeling compound



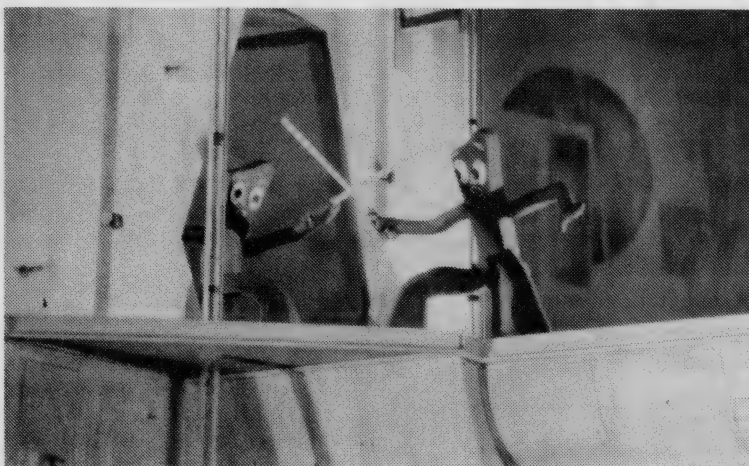
plastocene. While Gumby the character has proven to be durable, Gumby the model is not. Eighty to ninety Gumby figures are used to make a single television episode.

While much remains the same, Clokey noted there have been changes to the production techniques.

"The big changes were in the new materials, the new plastics that came out in the time between we were making the old series and the new, like styrofoam, and foamcore board and various types of tape. One of the things we used that we never used before was a motion controlled camera. We had the camera mounted on a device that was controlled by the computer. We could program in exact movements we wanted the camera to make."

Something else new for Gumby is a girlfriend named Tara which Clokey points out means "star" in Sanskrit. This kind of detail, and a strong moral core are some of the most appealing aspects of Clokey's work. His background and interests are reflected in his films, but Clokey said it's not deliberate.

"It comes out of my subconscious. When I'm writing a script, it's almost like daydreaming.



Gumby fights himself in a scene inspired by *Star Wars*.

The subconscious is a very spiritual place sometimes," Clokey explained.

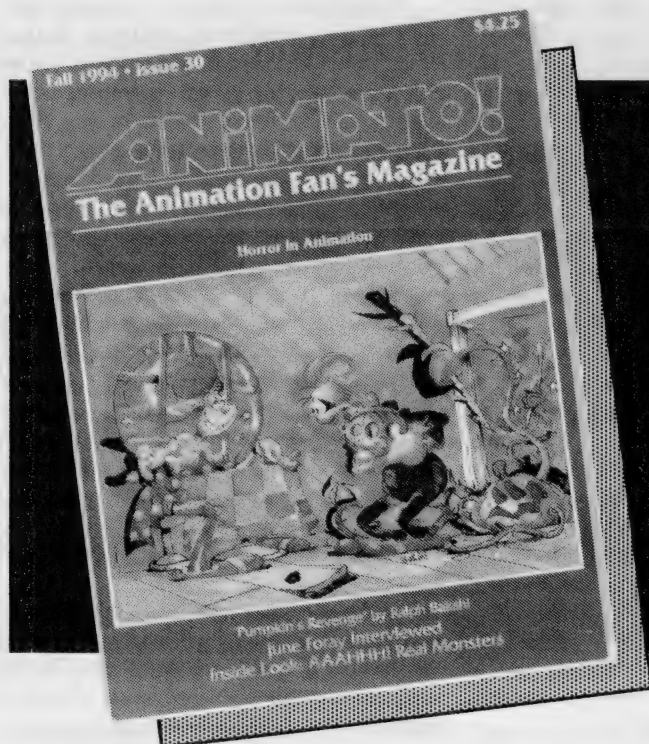
"No, we don't set out to make a moral issue. It just happens spontaneously. I was brought up going to be an Episcopal minister. After graduating from the university, I went to seminary in Connecticut, but after the first year I decided I didn't want to be a minister in the Episcopal or any church. I, what you might say, fled to Hollywood where I could make religious films. I couldn't make religious films there because I had to be a member of the union to get into any of the production companies."

Calling himself "an idealist," Clokey recalled that for the first seven years of Gumby's run, he would not allow any merchandising because he wanted the character to be "a gift to children and not exploit children." Clokey also produced the religious animated children's show *Davey and Goliath*, underwritten by the Lutheran Church, for a decade.

Clokey has maintained a deep interest in the world's religions, and has been particularly involved with the teachings of Sri Sathya Sai

Baba, a guru from India. In fact, Clokey attributes much of the new interest in Gumby to an event that happened in 1979 when Clokey went to India to meet Sri Sathya Sai Baba, and the religious leader blessed Gumby. *Gumby - The Movie* is dedicated to this teacher.

What's next? Arrow Releasing has announced an October date for the distribution of the video of *Gumby - The Movie*, and Clokey has already completed the script for the next Gumby feature, *Gumby II*. 



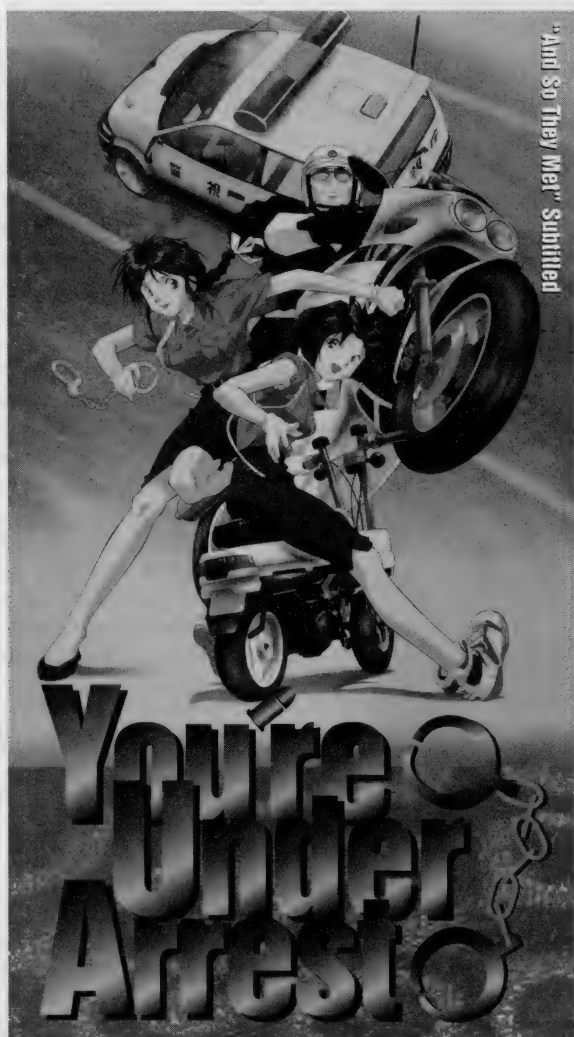
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Power Rangers Get Animated!

The director of the new Power Rangers movie talks about the computer animated effects that add something new to the television favorite



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by Judith Reboj

The ultra-popular *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers* take their war against monsters to the big screen on June 30. While the news may elicit a collective groan from parents across the country, director Bryan Spicer wants to assure them that he will offer a pleasurable moviegoing experience for adults and kids alike.

For the uninitiated, the Power Rangers are a group of masked teenagers from Angel Grove, California, who use martial arts and huge animal-like robots called Zords (after their mystical advisor, an inter-dimensional wizard named Zordon) to fight a group of evil creatures unleashed by an ill-fated moon landing.

Much of the footage from the television series is taken from Japanese *Super-Sentai* shows. In Japan, television shows are designed to last only one season. If a program proves popular enough, it will continue the next year with new actors playing similar characters in similar situations.

The *Super-Sentai* shows, which feature a group of teens using giant robots to fight monsters, have been a staple of Japanese television for over 15 years! One of the previous

versions, *Dynaman*, was a minor cult hit when it ran with humorous dubbing on the USA Network's *Night Flight* in the late 80's.

When *Power Rangers* proved successful the makers had to become a little more resourceful, as they began to exhaust the footage from their original base show *Zyu Rangers*. So they began shooting more of their own action sequences to mix with *Zyu Rangers* footage and scenes from the following season's *Dai Rangers*. That's why team leader Tommy's White Ranger outfit (from *Dai Rangers*) doesn't match the others'. Likewise, when the second season began, the old dinosaur-like Zords from *Zyu Rangers* were replaced by rare and mythical animal Zords from *Dai Rangers*.

The movie will introduce elements which will tie into the series' third season, which will feature footage from last year's Japanese series *Ninja Task Force Kakurangers*, but no existing Japanese footage will be used.

The most noteworthy change will be that, rather than the sometimes unconvincing model work and costumes of the series, the Zords and many of the monsters will be computer generated imagery designed by VIFX of Los Angeles.

For the curious, the current television Zords will not appear at all. The new Zords will be a red monkey, a black frog, a blue wolf, a yellow bear, a pink crane and the White Ranger's "Ninja Falconzord."

Spicer is confident the upgraded effects will boost the quality and appeal of the film. "Typically, what they would do on the TV show or an old Japanese monster movie is put a guy in a big rubber suit in a miniature city and have him thrash about. But we wanted to make the movie look much better, so we built our own miniature city in scale and we animated computer generated characters within the city." He says that "the third act of the movie is completely computer generated within the live world."

He says that he sold Fox on the use of CGI. "When I came on the project, I pushed towards it because it's the future of our technology in movies, to make things look more realistic, and I wanted things very realistic."

"It's also...the first time it's been done in a movie, to actually have CGI creatures roaming the streets and battling it out. It's something that the movie [remake of] *Godzilla* wants to do, but they just can't afford it right now."

Spicer says that the film, which features 175 computer generated shots as well as over 300 optical animation effects, will have effects that are "a cross between *Jurassic Park* and *Terminator*." While apparently it is not imminent this season, he indicates that Saban, the company that produces *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers*, has at least considered using CGI effects for the television version.

He is confident that it will appeal to a broader audience, not only because of the big budget effects, but because of an appealing script by Arne Olson. The story will have considerable humor, particularly from villains Lord Zedd and Rita Repulsa (whose voice is supplied by Barbara Goodson, who coincidentally dubs many female characters in translated Japanese anime brought to the U.S.).

Originally rivals, Zedd and Rita married on the series late in the second season. Their bickering relationship—Try to envision Lucy and Ricky Ricardo as evil space aliens—will be played for laughs.

Also, expect a greater sense of menace as



their new rival, the even more dastardy Ivan Ooze (played by former *Raiders of the Lost Ark* Nazi Paul Freeman) destroys the Rangers' headquarters and severely wounds Zordon. Although he wouldn't say whether or not Ooze would appear on the series, Spicer did indicate that Freeman would not.

While Rita and Zedd have relied on humanoid creatures called the putty patrol to attack Angel Grove, Ooze will summon the Tengu Tribe, crow goblins from Japanese folklore. They're a little more serious than the goofy (Yes, it was hard to resist the temptation to say "silly") putties, who actually have a large "Z" on their chests which apparently has no other purpose than to cause them to self-destruct when hit.

Spicer's film will also introduce a new facet of the show which will carry over into the series next year. The Rangers will have new costumes in addition to their familiar power suits. These loose fitting outfits which Spicer calls their Ninjetti uniforms are attractive, comfortable looking and will allow the Rangers to appear in costume with their faces unmasked! (One can only imagine how happy the actors were with this development!)

New armored versions of the power suits

will be featured too. (Spicer said not to expect to see the movie versions on the series any time soon. Apparently, their upkeep is horribly impractical for series television.) Fans of the series will note that the movie Rangers have the gold power symbols on their chests that have been used in the merchandising for years but never appeared on the series uniforms!

New costumes are being made for all of the major characters to upgrade them for the demands of the big screen.

Spicer, whose previous credits include a couple of seasons as producer/director of the Fox television series *Parker Lewis Can't Lose* and, more recently, as director for several episodes of *Seaquest DSV*, is no stranger to tough competition. So it should come as no surprise that he shows no fear when it is pointed out that *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers: The Movie* opens a mere seven days after Disney's *Pocahontas*.

He says that he believes that the two films "Will complement each other. When a movie comes out and is very successful, then the other movies that come out around it become very successful, too, just because people want to see...good movies. If they see a movie one week and it's a good movie, then they'll go back next

week and see another movie. [The summer moviegoing experience] kinda grows on you."

Spicer only briefly addressed the ongoing controversy about the allegedly violent nature of the Rangers. He reminds parents that karate, one of their major weapons, is a defensive, not offensive art. "It is to be used to make you a better person...to respect yourself and respect the art."

A test screening of the film was held for about 400 people on April 2. According to Spicer, the response cards were "100% positive" from children and adults alike. A "making of" featurette attached to the video release of *The Pagemaster* does indicate that the film is much more polished looking than its TV counterpart.

So confident is Fox that *Power Rangers* will do well that Spicer says that the script for the sequel is currently being written.

With what Spicer calls a "bigger, better" version of what may arguably be the most popular children's television series in history, the *Power Rangers* just may give Disney a run for its box office money this summer. 

Judith Reboy is a regular contributor to ANIMATO!.

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The Whole Truth About Casper

The new film is a hit, the toys are everywhere, and here's the man who created the character

by G. Michael Dobbs

The focal point for the pre-show reception for the retrospective on Famous Studios was a table in the packed offices of the Department of Film at the Museum of Modern Art. A poster-sized piece of paper covered part of the table, and everyone who had worked at the various incarnations of Famous/Paramount studios was asked to autograph it and perhaps draw a sketch. Myron Waldman, Ralph Bakshi, Jackson Beck, and Shamus Culhane were just a few of the people who made their way through the crowds to sign the poster, but one name quickly attracted my attention...Seymour Reit. Reit was a storyman at the Fleischer Studio and had worked at Famous as well. His greatest contribution to animation however was his creation of a friendly ghost named Casper.

I asked Jerry Beck to point Reit out to me, and I introduced myself to a dapper man with a ready smile. While Reit's co-creator of Casper, the late Joe Oriolo, had been clearly upset when he discussed Casper with me in an interview in the late Seventies, Reit seemed bemused about the situation. He only confirmed that impression in a subsequent interview for *ANIMATO!*. With Casper once again being the center of a multi-million dollar operation, one would think the man who received less than \$200.00 for his original story would be just a little chagrined.

Reit, however, has taken the entire Casper in stride, including Oriolo's revisionist history of the character which often ignored or de-emphasized Reit's contributions. "Joe had a way of ignoring facts," said Reit with a laugh. "There has been a tremendous amount of murkiness and misunderstanding about Casper and where and how it started."

Clearing up the origins of this very popular character is something I tried to do in an article in *ANIMATO!* #30. As noted in that piece, depending on what one reads, Casper was created by: artists at Harvey Comics; Oriolo to comfort his daughter who was scared of the dark; or largely by Oriolo with the collaboration of Reit.

Here, though, is the real story from the man who did create Casper.

Seymour Reit graduated from New York University in 1938 at the age of 19. He wrote for various student publications, and through a friend applied for a job at the Fleischer Studios. Reit was hired, and told that as soon as he

graduated to come down to Florida. At the time, the studio was building up its workforce for the production of *Gulliver's Travels* and for the move to a new facility in the Miami area.

"It was the tail-end of the Depression, and I had a job waiting for me at a big \$25.00 a week which in those days was not to be sneezed at," said Reit.

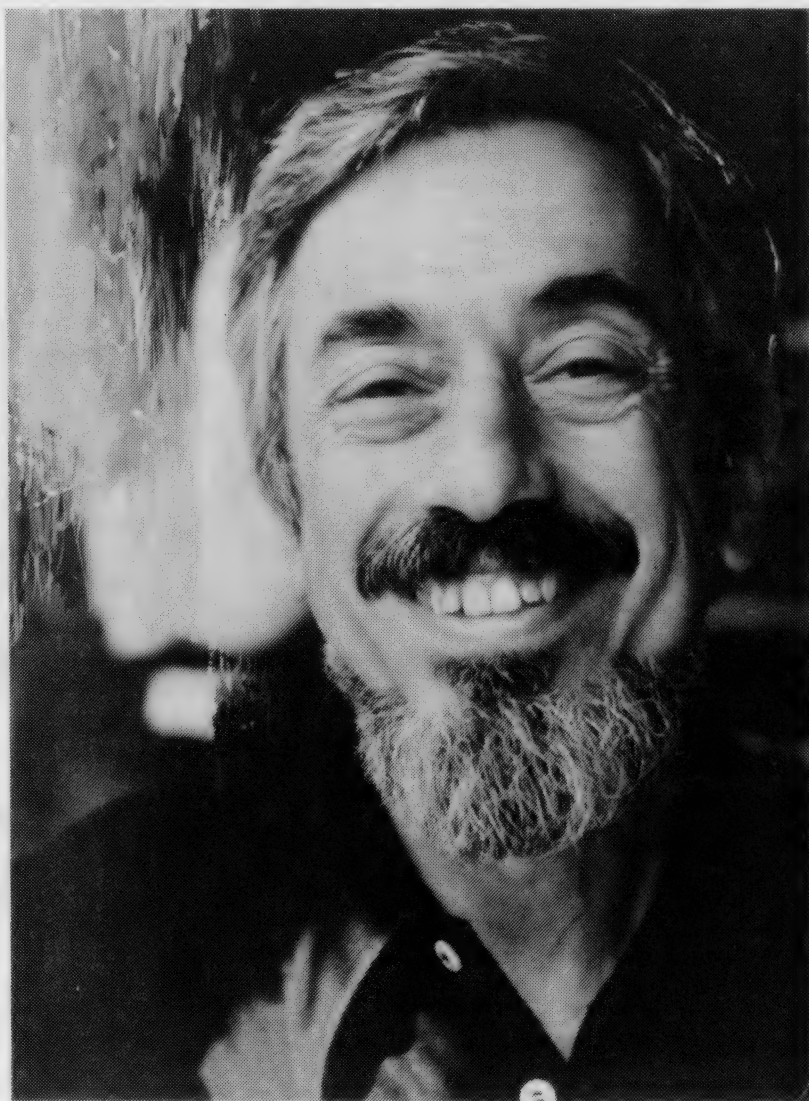
Reit remembers his time at the Fleischer Studio with great fondness. "Those were good years," he said.

He roomed with Woody Gelman and Frank Napoleon in an apartment which cost \$45.00 a

month. The winter was the busy season for the area, and Reit noted, that no one visited Miami in the summer and the prices plummeted.

"You could get a great meal in a nice restaurant for 50 cents [in the off-season]," he recalled.

Reit started as an inker, then he became an in-betweenner. He would also sell gags to the studio for the Popeye cartoons. Based on his success with the written word, he was then transferred to the story department. In 1940, the studio was looking for stories for a new series of one-shot cartoons, *Animated Antics*. Reit had



Seymour Reit



written a story about a ghost he named Casper which he thought would be good for the series, and would provide him with a few extra dollars. Joe Oriolo was part of Reit's circle of friends at the studio.

"Joe read this story which he liked a lot, and he said he would like to design a little character to go with it and see what we could do with it. I said, 'Fine,' " said Reit.

The nature of the collaboration said Reit was "my story and Joe's artwork." The team was not successful in placing the story with the Fleischer Studio, though, and Reit left Oriolo to try to sell the project, along with several others, when he entered the Army Air Corps during World War II.

Oriolo was successful in selling the story to the management of Famous Studios, the animation studio set up by Paramount Pictures when they ousted Max Fleischer in 1942. Famous was looking for properties of their own to develop, rather than license comic strip characters. Reit was still in the military when Oriolo sold Casper to Famous for \$175.00.

"What Joe sold was the combination of my script, my little short story, and his model chart of this little Casper character," recalled Reit.

The Friendly Ghost was released in 1945, and Reit pointed out that the opening of the film,

its narration and basic storyline came straight from his story. Another Casper short was made in 1948 with additional follow-up cartoons in 1949 and 1950. In 1951, the ghost was awarded his own series.

When Reit returned from the war, Oriolo split the money they received from the sale, and Reit began freelancing for Famous, contributing gags to cartoons, including subsequent Casper shorts.

"They'd give me a storyboard to put in dialogue, or they'd give me script to try to work out some incidents or some humor. But it was strictly freelance. At the time, Casper was just one of many theatrical cartoons that came and went. Later when they sold the whole library of Caspers to television, that's when it began to grow in popularity."

Reit's career moved in other directions. "Joe stayed in animation. He had his own production company. I moved on," said Reit. "For a while I wrote *Archie* comics. I originated many titles for them. I wrote *Little Lulu* [comics]. It was always the humor stuff, I never got into superheroes. I worked for *MAD* magazine in the Sixties. I was one of their regular freelance writers.

"So I went on. I began writing children's books. I have 80 children's titles that have been published, [and] several books for adults

including one that has been optioned for a movie ten times. I had a very flourishing career and Casper faded away."

For Oriolo, though, the success that Casper enjoyed was a constant reminder of the one that got away.

"It was like a thorn in his side. He was always involved in animation and with people in the field and here was this wonderful character we had done and it was out of our hands. He would periodically call me and say he was getting a lawyer to break this contract. And he asked 'are you with me' and I'd say 'Of course.' This is a joint thing and we'd stand to profit. He would try without success. He had signed an air-tight agreement. It was no longer our property. It really embittered him, and he never got over it. I was much more philosophical. What I want is the facts put straight that I was the one who created the character."

Reit has frequently written letters to various publications when stories on Casper's origins appeared, trying to set the record straight. And while not everyone might understand his role in the creation of Casper, at least the hundreds of thousands of people who've attended the new Casper movie have seen the credit line with his name.

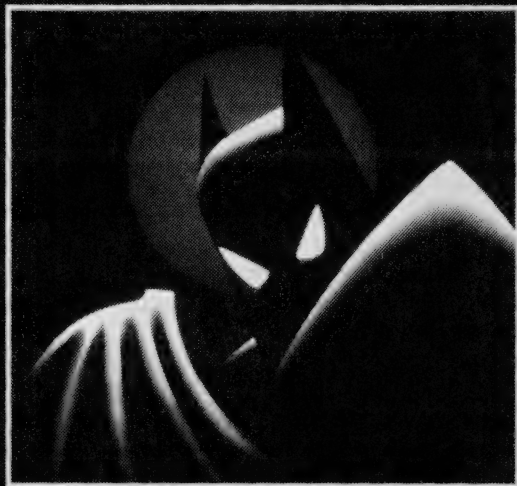
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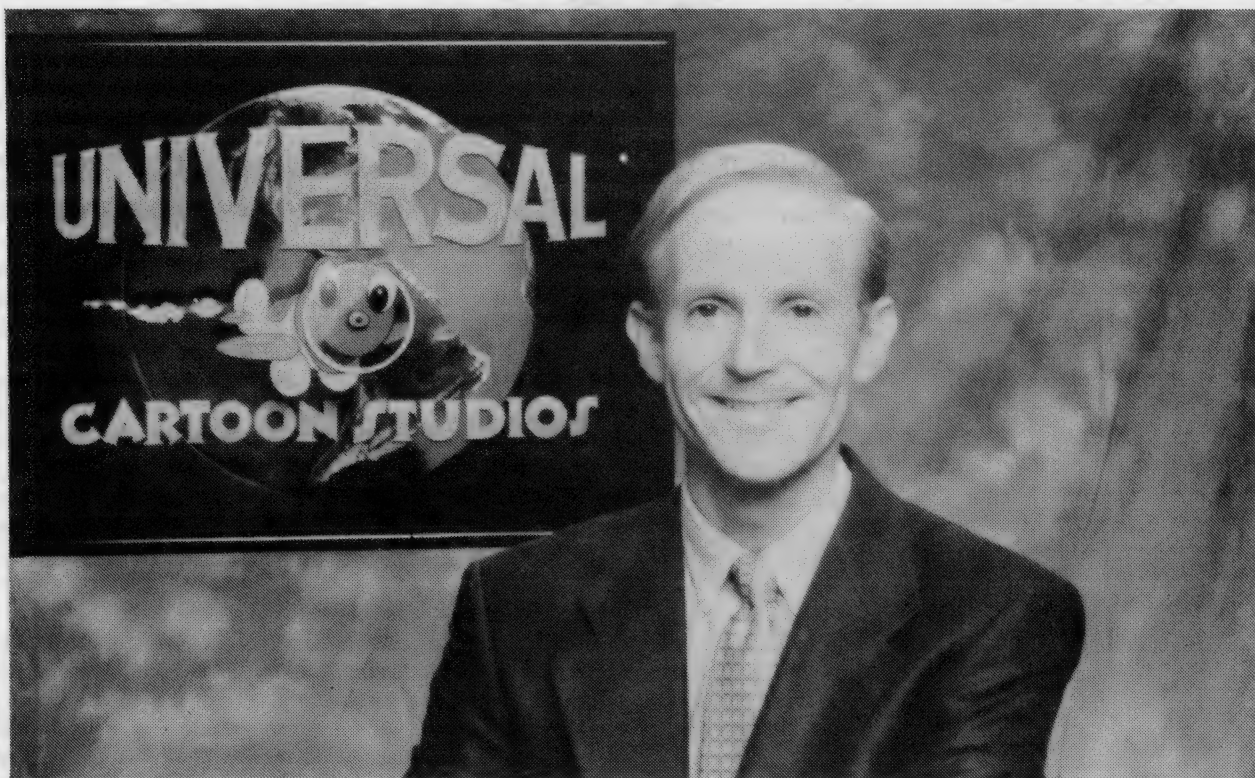
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The Return of Universal



Jeff Segal, president and founder of MCA/Universal Family Entertainment and Universal Cartoon Studio

The studio best known for Woody Woodpecker is re-inventing itself with the production of a variety of new shows

by G. Michael Dobbs

Quick! What comes to mind when you think of cartoons from Universal Pictures? Woody Woodpecker? That's right. But, come to think of it, there hasn't been much action from that character or the studio since the Seventies.

That was the problem facing Jeff Segal five years ago. Segal is the president and founder of MCA Universal Family Entertainment and the Universal Cartoon Studios. He has been responsible for a new crop of cartoons bearing the Universal logo including Saturday morning offerings *Back to the Future*, *Fievel's American Tails*, and *Beethoven* for CBS, *Problem Child* for USA Network and *Monster Force* and *EXOSQUAD* for syndication.

Segal is no stranger to animation. He began his career in Japan working for Toei Animation Studios and Tsuburaya Productions on various animated productions. Once back in this country, he joined Hanna-Barbera as a writer/story editor/producer for series such as *SuperTed*, *Fantastic Max*, *Midnight Patrol* and *Popeye and Son*.

"I started as a story editor and writer and worked on a lot of Hanna-Barbera shows. From there I became involved with development and

was elevated to the vice president of creative affairs and became involved with international co-venture projects that we were producing with partners in various parts of the world, Europe and Asia particularly. After I became the senior vice president, I came over to MCA," said Segal.

The entertainment giant recruited Segal to found and head a new animation division. His first task was to evaluate just what properties MCA had and to see if those properties could jumpstart the operation. Segal made the decision to use some of Universal's hit films to spearhead his division's operations.

Segal's first series was an adaptation of the *Back to the Future* films. Next came a series based on other successful Universal movies, and recently Segal added an effort to enter the direct-to-video market that has been trailblazed by Disney's *Return of Jafar*. MCA released earlier last December a dtv sequel to *Land Before Time* (see Stephen R. Bissette's review last issue), which according to *Video Store* magazine has sold a very respectable 3.25 million units to date.

Universal's latest ventures are *Earthworm Jim* for the new WB Network, and is described

proudly by Segal as "a subversive show," and a new *Casper* series for the Fox Children's Network.

"In the category of animation, we're a new company and we've tried to find a way of establishing ourselves," said Segal. He added that the company is now developing a computer-generated show in conjunction with a television network.

Segal has recently started the 1996-97 development season and reported that three-quarters of the projects the company is considering are creator-driven shows and one quarter being based on live-action feature films, although the shows finally greenlighted for production may not reflect this ratio. One film Segal is actively considering for a series is the most expensive movie of all time, Kevin Costner's epic science fiction adventure *Water World*.

The goal of taking a successful live-action feature and turning into an animated series is building a franchise, Segal explained. *Beethoven*, a live action comedy starring Charles Grodin as a harried husband and dad who has to cope with the problems caused by his family's Saint Bernard did well enough theatrically to



The Werewolf bad guy from *Monster Force*. ©1994 MCA TV

inspire a successful sequel. Both live action films have done very well on home video, and now there is a cartoon series which keeps the Beethoven name and concept in front of its target audience.

With the animation industry buzzing over the concept of creator-driven shows, one might wonder if Universal has taken some critical lumps over its slate of cartoons adapted from hit live-action movies. Segal is quick to point out the commitment he has to the company's new creator-driven shows

"Our agenda for animation is pretty broad. On one hand, we are really into creator-driven properties. For example, the *Earthworm Jim*

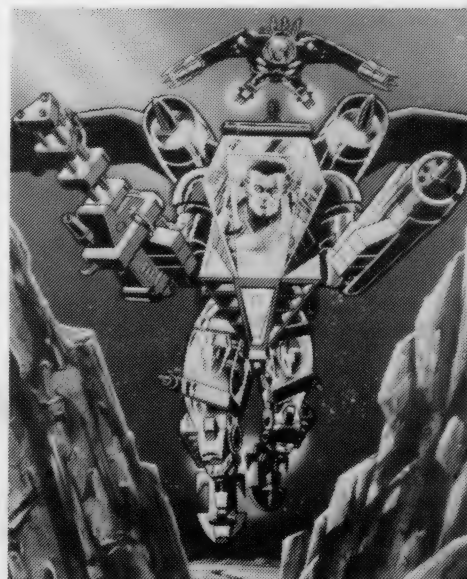
property at WB is exactly that. The creator of the show is a brilliantly creative, wildly visionary guy who came up with this property. It became a video game, and he's working on the tv series and he's giving it a really interesting twist that only somebody with passion for a property can, as opposed to somebody who's just doing it for a paycheck.

"Even on our tv series which we adapt from feature films we try to work with the original creative artists. The original writers for *Problem Child* were involved with the *Problem Child* tv series. On *Back to the Future* one of the original writers, Bob Gale, was the creative supervisor on the show and he worked daily with the writers to try to keep the consistency of what *Back to the Future* was all about."

One franchise Segal is working on to revive is Walter Lantz's Woody Woodpecker. The question Segal is trying to answer, though, is "how?" There is the possibility of new theatrical shorts, a new television series and perhaps a feature film starring Woody and other Lantz characters, but Segal said the company wants to find a new approach to the characters which will ensure their acceptance by Nineties' audiences.

Of the two currently syndicated series one is an original, while one uses a very mighty Universal franchise. *Monster Force* is a re-working of the venerable Universal horror characters. In the new series, Dracula is an evil mastermind whose attempts to take control of the world are thwarted by a young scientist and his team who are aided by the Frankenstein monster.

Universal is also producing the *EXO SQUAD* science fiction series for syndication. Segal noted that one challenge is finding suitable times for both shows. The competition for after-



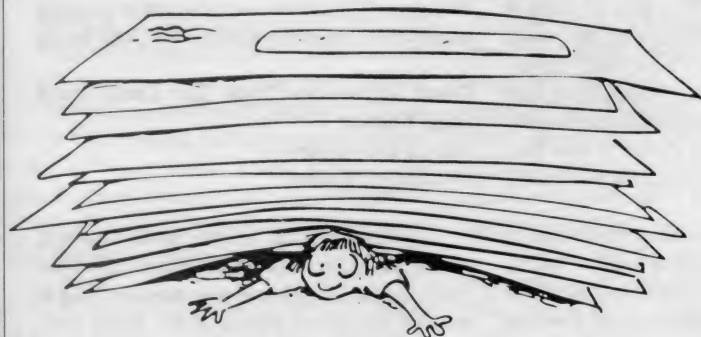
EXOSQUAD leader Lt. J.T. Marsh ©1994 MVA TV

school broadcast time slots is stiff, not only from other animated series, but also from talk shows.

Segal is well aware of the almost daily changes in both the animation and broadcast industries, and stated that producing shows for just Saturday morning consumption does not supply enough revenue for an operation Universal's size. With the success of the dtv sequel to *The Land before Time*, and Segal's intention to explore the possibilities of feature-length and theatrical cartoon production, no doubt one can expect some surprises from the relatively new company on the block.



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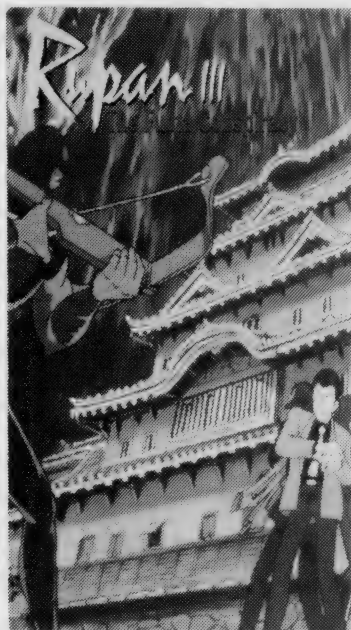
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アニメーション ANIMATO! ANIME GUIDE

by John Beam, Stephen Cooke, Andrew Osmond
and G. Michael Dobbs

Rupan III: The Fuma Conspiracy
AnimEigo ET095-001
73 minutes Dubbed



Ooooh, boy! Now this tape was fun! Master thief Rupan and his gang, his arch foe Inspector Zenigata, an ancient family secret and treasure, and about three thousand evil ninja add up to one of the best anime productions I've seen in a long time. Why doesn't someone try to release this kind of film theatrically in this country?!

The characters created by the Japanese artist Moneky Punch are revered by anime fans, and for good reason. The Rupan films are action-packed adventures with clever twists and a true panache. They are true modern-dress swashbucklers, and *The Fuma Conspiracy* is no exception.

The animation is first-rate, and the dubbing is not as clumsy as many anime tapes I've seen. This is a perfect introductory tape to Japanese animation. GMD
Super-Deformed Double Feature

Scramble Wars and *10 Little Gall Force*
(Cat #AT093-004, 67 min.)

This video is a must for all you Artmic fans. Even those of you who do not know what I'm talking about will probably enjoy this. It is a celebration of violence and destruction, disguised under the facade of cuteness (the Japanese word is "Kawaii"). This phenomenon is similar to the sort of animation created in the U.S. by Bob Clampett for Warner Brothers in the 1930's and 40's (Bob Clampett created the Tweety-Pie series, among others). The Super-Deformed phenomenon in Japan mostly uses characters from serious anime (and sometimes live-action) series, and miniaturizes them to cute, dwarf-like proportions. These characters are usually only cute on the surface. Like gremlins, they leave a trail of destruction in their wake.

The first film presented (*10 Little Gall Force*) is a take-off of the first two episodes in the *Gall Force* series. It depicts the "filming" of these episodes inside "Studio Chaos." The characters are shown attempting to act out their scenes and say their lines successfully. Their blundered and disastrous attempts are the butt of every joke. Since many of the jokes rely on the audience's knowledge of the *Gall Force* story, it would be a good idea to find out about it, one way or another. This portion of the video also contains an interesting visit with Kenichi Sonoda, the character designer for *Gall Force* and *Bubblegum Crisis*. This tour of sorts is conducted by Michie Tomizawa, the voice actress for "Pony" in *Gall Force*, and "Linna" in *Bubblegum Crisis*. This entertaining spot includes a very short anime drawn by Sonoda, which explains why *Gall Force 2* was late. Over-all, I enjoyed this portion of the double feature.

Scramble Wars throws all the characters in the Artmic stable into one thirty minute "wacky races" take-off (Artmic is the studio which created and co-produced these films). The race is to decide who will win the coveted "Genom Trophy." Contestants include the "Knight Sabers" (from *Bubblegum Crisis/Crash*), the

crew of the "Star Leaf" (from *Gall Force - Eternal Story*), and Ital and Sahari (from *Genesis Survivor Gaiarth*). Making cameos are the cast of *Riding Bean*, an Artmic OVA written and directed by Kenichi Sonoda (OVA means - Original Video Animation).

What results is an all-out war. Sylia Stingray nearly runs over fellow Knight Saber Priss, and threatens to blow every one up in a mine field. The "Super-Boomer Car X" aims an orbiting particle beam weapon at his opponents, and attempts to obliterate them. The "Star Leaf" crew summons a "Planetary Destruction Cannon" to wipe everyone out. Need I say more. Lots of good, clean fun.

While this OVA is easily the funniest of the two, it also contains jokes that will lose a lot of American audiences. Fortunately, AnimEigo provides thorough liner-notes which explains everything. Regardless of this fact, there will be jokes that only someone from Japan would be able to appreciate. For example; there is a scene depicting Ital and Sahari selling Mentaiko, speaking in Hakata-ben dialect, with a banner that reads "Pirittokaraiyo!" spread over their little stand. This is not going to be nearly as funny to American viewers as it is to Japanese. However, I cannot fault the producers of this video for my ignorance of Japanese cultural humor.

I highly recommend this video. However, if you buy this, and you do not understand what is going on, don't blame me.

Warning!: This video contains nudity. Nothing provocative, but nudity nonetheless. John Beam

Giant Robo: The Night The Earth Stood Still: Volume 1
Manga Entertainment
90 minutes; dubbed

I really wanted to like this production as it had an old-fashioned comic book feel to it. With this secret society of near-superheroes trying to prevent the power source of the future from causing the planet's destruction, *Giant Robo* had some of the flavor of the old *Justice League* and *Avengers* comics of the Sixties.

What prevented me from enjoying it was the lack of background information which I really thought was crucial to understanding the film's title character. Who or rather what is Giant Robo and just how did a 12 year-old boy wind up being his pilot? Perhaps all will be revealed in the next installment.

The animation is quite good, and the dubbing wasn't distracting, and I look forward to seeing the next tape. **GMD**

Nadia Volume One

Lumivision/ 1991/ LVD9350/ Animation Director Hideaki Anno/ 90 Minutes/ Fullscreen/ CLV/ 25 Chapter stops/ Digital tracks: Japanese & mono, Analog tracks: English & Stereo/ Colour; Supplemental...Original Japanese opening and closing credits

I never fail to be amazed by the way Japanimation can go from the childhood whimsy of *My Neighbor Totoro* to the ultra-violent *Fist Of The North Star* without skipping a stylistic beat. Huge eyes, lipless mouths and stiff movements are usually the norm, although with the right mixture of skill and imagination, masterpieces like *Akira* do appear.

Nadia is closer to *Astro Boy* than to *Akira*, and its television origins are readily apparent, especially in scenes where characters talk with their backs to the camera, or Scooby Doo-style talking head shots. Even so, there's a lot of charm to be found in *Nadia*; from its Jules Verne-meets-Pippi Longstocking story to the entertaining turn-of-the-century background.

Nadia, a wild, exotic circus acrobat, is on the run from evil adventuress Grandis Granva, who is after a rare and magical gem in *Nadia*'s possession. During an encounter with her arch-foe on the Eiffel Tower, our young heroine encounters boy inventor Jean-Coq Raltigue, visiting Paris to demonstrate his flying machine at the International Exposition of 1889.

While *Nadia* is running away from Granva, Raltigue is hoping to find his father, a sailor lost at sea. Sequences like an exciting battle at sea and the buoyant appeal of the characters keep the story zipping along, while the crazy inventions and fanciful vehicles maintain visual interest.

Both kids and adults can enjoy *Nadia*. The action and young characters will keep the tots amused, while the humour, literary references and a sexy villainess will entertain the grownups. Volume One contains the first four episodes of the series, which ran for a year in Japan and spawned a feature version. Subtitled "*The Secret of the Blue Water*", the storyline is self-contained and can be watched alone, or with other volumes in the series.

The material on this disc is only a few years old, so the picture is fresh with sharp colours. In fact, the use of colour is one of *Nadia*'s main assets, from the gentle blue water to Grandis'

fiery red hair.

The disc has a couple of quirks. The digital channel features the original Japanese soundtrack in mono, while the English translation is in stereo on the analog track. There are no subtitles. The Japanese track is slightly muddied with noticeable tape hiss. The analog sound is clear and reasonably recorded, although there is still a small amount of hiss, and it rarely sounds like stereo. It's interesting to compare the English and Japanese performances; the original sound-track has more gusto, although I'm sure Toshiro Mifune isn't losing any sleep.

Also, the disc claims to be CLV on one side and CAV on the other. This is not the case, since the disc clocks in at 1:31:51. A minor point, to be sure, and certainly not one to ruin the enjoyment of this breezy adventure tale. **Stephen Cooke**

WARRIORS OF THE WIND LAPUTA: THE FLYING ISLAND

Warriors of the Wind was released by Vestron video in 1985, and reissued on the First International label. As many people know, it's an edited version of Miyazaki's *Nausicaa and the Valley of the Wind* released in Japan some two years earlier. Allegedly, it was *Warriors* which convinced Miyazaki not to sell any more films to the West without prior theatrical screening, so Vestron has a lot to answer for!

Warriors is set a thousand years in the future. Civilisation has been destroyed by "seven days of fire", and the land is encroached by a vast, sprawling toxic jungle where strange insect mutations flourish. Only a few refuges for humanity remain, such as the valley of wind, so called because sea breezes keep it clear of the poisonous air. One day, its peace is shattered by an invasion force from the warlike state of Tomekula, who murder the valley's king and exploit the land to nurture their fire-demon. The only hope lies with young Princess Zandra (originally Nausicaa), who has to stop the conflicting forces of man and nature from destroying each other.

Viewing it now, *Warriors* doesn't seem all that great a travesty, though one can see how Miyazaki might have been upset. All the chopped scenes (totalling twenty minutes) are fairly incidental, though they develop the film's eco-theme in hinting the jungle may be the ultimate salvation of man. Dubbing is competent: the dialogue is well-written (barring one or two slips), while the voice acting is mediocre but bearable. The film's main troubles lie elsewhere.

The central fault of the film is in its construction. While all Miyazaki's films are slow-paced, *Warriors* devotes far too much time to establishing background and setting, and the subsequent story is poorly conceived by comparison. It's a runaround: our heroes are

constantly eluding monsters, being captured or trapped, and making daring escapes, but there's very little sense of narrative drive or purpose. The reason for this may lie in *Warriors*' origins as a manga epic. One gets the feeling Miyazaki realized midway he wasn't going to get through the full comicstrip, and cobbled later scenes together willy-nilly: perhaps he should have made it a TV serial and used the extra length. In its finished form, "*Warriors*" feels impressive, but decidedly flawed. The action scenes are dynamic and exciting, and the animation excellent, but despite this the film remains the least satisfactory of Miyazaki's work.

Laputa: The Flying Island is a good film for comparison, because it retains many of *Warriors*' virtues while improving on its faults. Like *Warriors*, *Laputa* is a fantasy adventure. The setting is modeled on Wales at the turn of the century, but with airships, not automobiles, as the main mode of transport. A band of pirates raid an airship in search of the fabled "levitation stone": this is owned by a young girl, Sheeta, whose heritage is a mystery. In what follows, Sheeta is befriended by Pazu, a boy who works in a rural mining community. Pazu dreams of following in the footsteps of his aviator father, who reputedly sighted the mythical island of Laputa in a storm cloud. When Sheeta is threatened by the pirates, and by a sinister Government agent called Musha, Pazu resolves to protect her, and the two enter a series of adventures that ultimately lead them to Laputa itself.

It takes the viewer a while to realize just how good *Laputa* is. At first, it feels like just another cartoon, albeit with more attention to detail than most. The establishing shot of Pazu's village gives a hint of what is to follow: a bold image of serried ranks of houses huddled under a sheer rock face, a clear, simple picture that gives the viewer an instant understanding of Pazu's home. This kind of directorial craftsmanship is manifested through the picture. The action sequences have all the power of *Aladdin*'s rollercoasters, the aerial scenes convey the dreamy freedom of flight, and *Laputa* itself is a perfect symbol of nature in peaceful harmony. In contrast to *Warriors*, the balance between action and plotting is kept just right: the thrills are spaced throughout the film to keep one wanting more, while the characterisation and background give the film an "epic" feel none of its rivals can match.

It's worth singling out the supporting character Ma Dola in this context: villainess at the outset, she's nonetheless so appealing that when she becomes allied to the children, it feels like a natural plot development as opposed to an arbitrary twist. It's also refreshing to see animators confident enough to make the film "naturalistic" and "cartoony" as the plot demands, but not let the action degenerate into a mix of clashing styles (a criticism levelled at,

for example, Disney's *Black Cauldron*.) In Miyazaki's universe, it's legitimate for strongmen's shirts to explode at the biceps, or heroes to hang above chasms longer than Harold Lloyd ever did, but at the same time guns kill, punches hurt, and the world can be a dangerous place for two small children. Miyazaki's cartoons are more anarchic than the real world, but at the same they're a place for genuine stories rather than strings of gags. It's a lesson other animators would do well to learn.

A final point, which applies to both *Laputa* and *Warriors of the Wind*. If critics still question that action-packed, well-told stories can be presented in animation outside Disney traditions, these two films should silence such doubts forever. Both lack the speaking animals, song routines and kitsch romance we're conditioned to expect from children's cartoons: both are intelligent, engrossing, and utterly inoffensive. *Warriors of the Wind* may fall short of classic status, but *Laputa* deserves to stand among the top children's fantasies of the century. And if Miyazaki ever relents and allows *Laputa* (or even a restored *Nausicaa*) onto Western video, perhaps then the critics will finally start taking anime seriously. **Andrew Osmond**

ARCADIA OF MY YOUTH

AnimEigo
AT093-009
130 Minutes

I wrote in the last issue of *ANIMATO!* concerning *Wings of Honneamis*, that never in my animation experience had I ever seen a film like it before. The same can be said for the Captain Harlock movie, *Arcadia of My Youth*. Yet, while my impressions of *Honneamis* are very favorable, *Arcadia* was in my mind a total disaster.

Never in my life have I felt so completely un-entertained with a piece of animation than I did with this one. The story deals with the Earth falling in the hands of the evil alien Illumidus Empire, and how brave earth people, led by the legendary Japanese comic book and anime character "Captain Phantom F. Harlock," fight against overwhelming odds. He does not necessarily succeed in this task, but he shows how it is better to fight standing for freedom, rather than to give in to slavery.

What is painfully missing from this film is any drama. The entire film is so terribly anticlimactic, with the same monotonous music, monotonous dialogue, and the same horribly monotonous animation running for a very long 130 minutes. Also, all of the characters carried the same somber expressions throughout. The animators were not required to use much imagination, since they drew the same solemn faces ad nauseam.

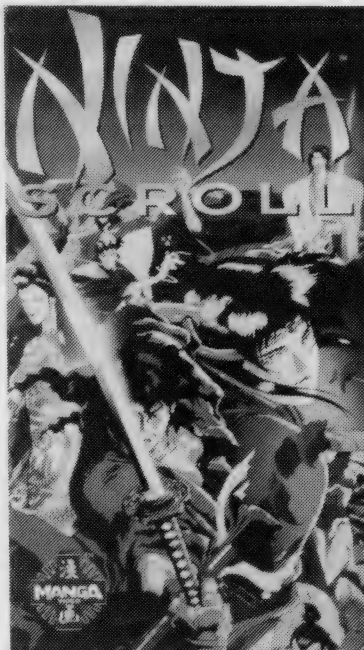
I know very well that Captain Harlock is an icon in Japanese pop-culture, and that Lieji

Matsumoto (Harlock creator) is a highly respected artist. I am sure that there are fans of his work reading this, and they are fuming. Yet, there is no escaping the fact that this is a poorly made film. A certain analogy can be made between this film and *Star Trek the Motion Sickness*...er...I mean the "Motion Picture." I am sure fans of *Star Trek* loved the movie version, in spite of the fact that it was a critical disaster. I hate to contradict the video box assertion that *Arcadia* is "A Japanese Animation Classic." In my mind, it falls woefully short of being anywhere near a film deserving of acclaim.

I must also say that I am insulted by the reference on the video box that the story of this film parallels the U.S. occupation of Japan. I saw more parallels in this film with the Nazi subjugation of most of Europe, or the Japanese brutality in China and The Philippines. Any student of history will tell you that the occupation of Japan was very lenient (in contrast to Germany's). This film gives the impression that it was the Axis Powers who were the "good guys" during World War Two.

All I can say, in closing, is that I am very glad I saw this film when I did. If this had been the first Japanese feature-length film I had ever seen, it might have very well been my last. **John Beam**

Ninja Scroll
Manga Entertainment
94 minutes; dubbed



There are several films in my video library which I know are just plain trash...guilty pleasures which are difficult to justify when a guest stumbles upon them. (What can I say in the defense of *Moonshine Country Express*, *Chained Heat* and *Mad Doctor of Blood Island*?) Well, I'm afraid, or delighted, to include *Ninja Scroll* among my dark little secrets.

Why? This superbly animated and dubbed film is a no-holds-barred adventure story set in feudal Japan. A ninja-for-hire is teamed with the Shogun's master spy and another ninja from a small but important clan to fight eight demons who work for a man determined to be the new Shogun. This story is fast-moving and exciting, the characterizations are sharply drawn, and there's loads of simply gratuitous sex and blood! No, this is definitely not a film for the kids, but if you're an adult, you just might enjoy it! **GMD**

3x3 Eyes

Lumivision/ 1991/LVD9382/ 116 minutes/ Full Screen/ SIDE 1, 2 CLV/ 29 Chapter Stops/ Digital tracks: Japanese, Stereo Surround/ Analog Tracks: English, Stereo Surround
Director: Daisuke Nishio Writer: Akinori Endo
Music: Kaoru Wada
English Version Produced and Directed by: Carl Macek

Well, at least this one kept me guessing. For sheer unpredictability, 3x3 Eyes had me in its grip for most of its two hours. Of course, most of it is also ludicrous, but if you watch enough Japanimation, one learns to be forgiving.

Let me see if I can sum this one up. Pai seems like merely a rambunctious teenage girl, but in reality she's three hundred years old and the last member of a race of Tibetan three-eyed superhumans. She asks a dying archaeologist how she can become a normal human. He tells Pai to find his son Yakamo in Japan, who, in turn, will help her find the ancient statue that will make her a mortal. She runs into Yakamo (literally) and finds he's a transvestite Geisha waitress (don't ask).

They set out, and along the way Yakamo becomes a member of the living dead wearing the "Sign of the Void" on his forehead; the pair is attacked by zombie henchmen, giant bugs, and a Lizard Guy; and Yakamo's best friend is bloodily transformed into a tree. Things really take a turn for the worse when our young adventurers encounter the cult of Kayan Wang, an ancient being who decimated Pai's race centuries ago. The cult also needs the statue, to bring their evil lord back to the land of the (more or less) living.

3x3 Eyes is fast-paced, funny and stylish. The characters are well-drawn and endearing. There are some moments of John Woo-esque violence, and others of the Evil Dead variety (the aforementioned girl-turns-into-a-tree sequence) that make this disc a poor choice for younger viewers, but fans of the genre will eat it up. Sadly, the weakest part of the whole program is the ending, where the climactic encounter between our heroine and her nemesis is practically thrown away, leaving us with a maybe to be continued, maybe not, conclusion.

As a disc, this is a joy to watch. The animators used a broad colour scheme that

makes most scenes eyecatchers, from bright purple and flowing crimson to evil glowing yellow and reptilian green. The transfer does the material justice, with no readily apparent flaws.

As for the sound, once again Streamline Pictures and Lumivision have chosen to place the original Japanese recording on the digital tracks, while the dubbed English version can be heard in analog. As a result; sound effects, music and voices all have more presence in Japanese, which should please purists (and make this disc highly marketable overseas), but will no doubt be an annoyance for those who simply want to follow the story. It should also be noted that contrary to the cover, the Japanese digital track is not only NOT mono, it is digital stereo that provides full separation in Pro-Logic mode, same as the English analog.

Tons of action, a bizarre storyline and even a dash of romance make "3x3 Eyes" a program that stands up to repeat viewing very well (heck, I watched it eight times while writing this) and a prime example of Japanimation for both the experienced fan, and the curious beginner. It's a shame this sort of material couldn't attain a more widespread audience on these shores, where the mainstream attitude deems animation suitable only for singing animals and doe-eyed heroines. **Stephen Cooke**

METAL SKIN PANIC

Madox-01

AnimEigo

AT089-001

50 Minutes

It is sort of difficult to find an angle from which to come from when talking about a film such as this. In many ways I found it to be entertaining, yet it is also a very flawed production. I suppose the best way to review it would be to tell what it is about, and then go on from there.

The story basically begins with a grudge one Lieutenant Kilgore (no doubt an American "Rambo" type) has against Elle Kusomoto, a beautiful pilot for the new personal mobile armor, the *Madox*. She defeated him in a test of this new weapon, and he is not so happy about it (why he is so peeved is never really explained, except maybe being beaten by a woman hurt his machismo). Anyway, this new weapon just happens to fall into the hands of a senseless young man, Koji Sujimoto, who somehow thinks it is something the army has discarded (yeah, right! Multi-million dollar equipment like this gets thrown away all the time).

In the meantime, Koji also has a date to meet with that evening. So what does he do? He tries out the neat suit, and gets trapped in it, wrecking parts of his neighborhood in the process. This gives Lt. Kilgore his chance at revenge (on the SUIT—I know, I don't get it

either!). Somehow, if Kilgore destroys the *Madox*, he will gain something by it. However, Elle (remember her?) pilots another *Madox* to capture the first one. She manages to stop Koji (after a lot of pointless fighting), but is ambushed by Army personnel under Kilgore! With her *Madox* damaged, she tells Koji he must defeat Kilgore if he is to survive.

Now, I just don't get it. The point of the film is for Koji to meet his date before it is too late, but he is stuck inside a robot suit, which he cannot get out of. But the subplot with the animosity Kilgore has for Elle does not make any rational sense. In fact, when it suddenly becomes a fight between Kilgore and Koji, the entire story becomes hopelessly muddled. What it becomes is a fifty minute romp.

This is a grade "A" production in regard to much of the animation. In fact, the studio designers of *Madox* (ARTMIC) are the same people who gave us the more popular *Bubblegum Crisis* series. The action is very well staged, and the animation is fluid. I have not seen many Original Video Animations with this much technical expertise and high production value. It is a good video for audiences who prefer films with lots of action, and little else.

It might interest readers to know that *Madox-01* was the very first video release by AnimEigo. However, I have learned that they were given the choice between this film and *Project A-ko*. Having seen both, and also seen how popular *Project A-ko* has become, I get the feeling the fine people at AnimEigo would have made the other choice if they could do it over again. **John Beam**

THE SECRET OF BLUE WATER

(Parts 1-7)

Dubbed: 20 minutes each

Streamline Pictures

Confession first: this is not intended as an overall review of *The Secret of Blue Water* or *Nadia and the Sea of Mystery* as it was originally called). Rather, this is in the way of some initial impressions of the TV serial, based on the Streamline dubs of the first seven episodes.

Briefly, the story relates the turn-of-the-century adventures of Jean, a young french inventor, and Nadia, a beautiful black acrobat with an unknown past. The two are thrown together after Nadia is cornered in Paris by three British (!) thieves seeking a jewel she carries, the enigmatic Blue Water. Jean helps the girl escape and the pair strike up a friendship, which is then tested as they encounter perils like storms, sea monsters and megalomaniacs. It'd be a pity to give away much of the story: most of the fun lies in the way the plot is gradually revealed, with different strands coming to the fore in each episode.

Suffice to say *Secret* belongs to the same "alternate history" genre as *Laputa* (with which it shares numerous plot similarities) and *Wings*

of Honneamis which involved Anno Hideaki, *Secret's* animation director). The setting is the 19th century of classic romance, with lost worlds, hidden civilizations, and wonderfully anachronistic technology. Take, for example, the crooks' oddball tank/boat/balloon transformer, or the state-of-the-art battleship, or the submarine. Ah yes, that submarine. Actually (and stop here if you don't want a major plot giveaway) it's not just any old submarine, it's the Nautilus. Yes folks, *The Secret of Blue Water* marks the anime debut of Captain Nemo, and not an acknowledgement of Jules Verne in sight! (Having faced everything from Harryhausen monsters to Burgess Meredith, anime was probably the only place left for Nemo to go.) It's impossible to tell if he's a goodie or a baddie yet (was it ever?) but he's definitely integral to the plot.

Clearly aimed at older kids, the complex storyline touches on serious themes, including racism - Nadia feels out of place because of the colour of her skin, and Jean's aunt dismisses her as a "coloured girl." Those fazed by "*The Lion King*", be warned, there's a genuinely upsetting sequence in Part Six where a little girl is told of her family's murder (imagine that getting past the campaigners for family viewing). More astounding yet, later on Nadia contemplates sacrificing the same girl to protect the Blue Water, a moral dilemma even modern Disney would blanch at.

The draughtmanship is at the top end of TV anime. All the characters are well-designed, though the character animation is often irritatingly cheesy. The backgrounds are sumptuous: check out the early river scenes for layouts that would not have looked out of place in a quality cartoon feature. As for dubbing, once you get past some outrageous accents (was that really *Star Trek's* Scotty on the Nautilus?) and the odd stilted line, it's actually pretty good. Nadia and Jean come over as likable three-dimensional characters who you want to know, and I gather the question of Nadia's origins dominates most of the story. The Brit crooks are fun as well, though the chase sequences in the first episodes smack of padding. The authoritative but detached Nemo reminded me of Doctor Anderson in the old pseudo-anime *Battle of the Planets* - well, someone had to like it!

Overall, *Secret's* main asset is that it's a rollicking good yarn. One imagines the story would work as well on the printed page as on screen, which is not true of many toons. With over ten hours of the saga to go, *Secret of Blue Water* promises to continue to intrigue and surprise, and I'll be first in line to see the next episodes. Oh, and the theme tune is wonderful!

Andrew Osmond



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SWAT KATS

Hanna-Barbera's flying, fighting felines are new cult favorites

by Mark Lungo

You think living in New York or Los Angeles is tough? You should try Megakat City. This all-feline metropolis is constantly besieged by an endless parade of supervillains, monsters and alien invaders. The city's paramilitary police force, the Enforcers, led by the competent but small-minded Commander Feral, is rarely effective against these menaces. Even the two most powerful people in the city, Mayor Manx and Deputy Mayor Callie Briggs, are often personally threatened by these powerful foes. But there's no need to fear, at least as long as Jake Clawson and Chance Furlong, two ex-Enforcers turned mechanics-cum-junkmen, are around. When the city is endangered, Clawson and Furlong hurry to the hangar hidden beneath Jake & Chance's Garage and assume their secret identities of Razor and T-Bone, two daring and resourceful fighter pilots known as the SWAT Kats. Our heroes use their courage, their training, their wits, and a variety of high tech weapons and vehicles built from the military salvage they collect (most notably their heavily armed fighter jet, the Turbo Kat) to defeat the evildoers and restore peace to Megakat City—at least until the next episode.

SWAT Kats: The Radical Squadron was originally created by the brothers Christian and Yvon Tremblay, two self-trained artists from Montreal. They initially conceived the SWAT Kats as two feline fighter pilots called "Chuck" and "Yeager" (after the legendary test pilot immortalized in *The Right Stuff*) who fought supervillains and giant monsters and were friends with a policewoman. The brothers sold this idea to Hanna-Barbera, where a creative team headed by producer Davis Doi, story editor Glenn Leopold, design coordinator/writer Lance Falk (all veterans of previous H-B series) and director Robert Alvarez (a Disney TV alumnus who directed every episode of *SWAT Kats*) was assembled. The Tremblays, Doi, Leopold and various H-B art staffers held a series of developmental meetings, during which the SWAT Kats' names were changed (T-Bone was almost called "Doomsday"), the policewoman was dropped (temporarily), and a new supporting cast was created. The Tremblays were kept on as creative consultants, and they continued to do artwork for the show.

When the show's first 13 episodes began production, the animation duties were assigned to two Asian studios: Japan's Mook Co., Ltd. (who worked on four first season episodes:



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"*The Pastmaster Always Rings Twice*," "*Night of the Dark Kat*," "*Metal Urgency*" and "*Katastrophe*") and Taiwan's Hanho Heung-Up Company Ltd. (who did the rest of the first season). "*Secret Files of the SWAT Kats*," a brief segment at the end of each episode, gave the audience information on the SWAT Kats, their weaponry and the villains they faced (as read by veteran announcer Ernie Anderson).

Matt Muhoherac, John Zuker, Randall Crissman & Nick Brown contributed heavy metal-tinged theme and background music. (Crissman & Brown weren't credited on the first four episodes.) The first season theme includes harmonized guitar work influenced by Brian May of Queen. (Zuker: "They played some of the *Flash Gordon* soundtrack that Brian May and Queen [composed]. [They wanted] the very heroic, anthem-like, but rock & roll kind of guitar that Brian May is known for.")

SWAT Kats debuted on TBS cable and broadcast syndication as part of *The Funtastic World of Hanna-Barbera's* 1993-94 lineup, along with another new creator-driven series, Donovan Cook's *2 Stupid Dogs*, and reruns of *The Jetsons* and *Dastardly and Muttley*.

The SWAT Kats frequently triumphed against overwhelming odds, and so did the

show that featured them. Despite intense competition (especially from the 800-pound gorilla called *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers*) and less-than-ideal time slots, *SWAT Kats'* first season was successful enough to warrant new episodes for 1994-95. Although most of the production crew stayed on, some changes were made. The producers of *SWAT Kats* were so impressed by Mook's animation that the company was hired to do the entire second season. The Tremblays' policewoman became Lt. Felina Feral (the Commander's niece), who was finally introduced as a major supporting character.

A new opening sequence was created, complete with an even harder-edged theme song by Muhoherac, Zuker, Crissman & Brown. (Zuker: "As opposed to Queen, they wanted more Metallica and AC/DC"...[Something that would] still be melodic and something memorable, but a little more aggressive.") The new opening replaced the old on some first season reruns. The voice actors' credits, which had always been individualized, now matched the actors' names to their characters. But not all the changes were good. After the first two episodes of the new season, the "Secret Files" were replaced by "Hanna-Barbera Video Trading Cards," which were mostly assemblages

of clips from various H-B series (an interesting exception featured documentary shots of H-B employees at work, including SWAT Kats voice artist Lori Allen). Two of the half-hour episodes were divided into two 11-minute segments (a la Gummi bears), but the short format made it difficult to introduce any complexity into the stories, and the result was a failed experiment.

Then came the unprecedented announcement that *SWAT Kats* was ceasing production—even though only 10 of the 13 episodes scheduled for the second year had been completed! Many of the artists working on the show were laid off. As for the last three episodes, they're in limbo: the scripts and storyboards are finished and the dialogue has been recorded, but Hanna-Barbera hasn't said when (or if) they'll ever reach the animation stage. The reason given for the cancellation was that *SWAT Kats* wasn't selling any merchandise. However, there's almost no *SWAT Kats* merchandise available (although an action figure line and a video game is scheduled for release later this year). It isn't the function of this article to comment on the skills of the Hanna-Barbera marketing staff, or the logic of punishing the *SWAT Kats* artists for mistakes made by other people. Besides, *SWAT Kats* is hardly the first show to suffer because of corporate mishandling—just ask any fan of *Star Trek* or *The Outer Limits*. But just as those two classics have returned, we can only hope that someday Hanna-Barbera will revive *SWAT Kats* just as it's revived so many of its other series.

So why is *SWAT Kats* worth reviving? Why does it have a devoted cult following among adult animation fans? Why is it widely regarded as Hanna-Barbera's best action/adventure series since the original *Jonny Quest* and *Space Ghost*? And why take the time and trouble to write an article about it? Here are the reasons:

1. HEAVY CREATOR INVOLVEMENT. When the Tremblay brothers sold *SWAT Kats* to Hanna-Barbera, they weren't just sent on their way. They stayed on as major creative partners. As a result, *SWAT Kats* has a distinctive look, just like critically acclaimed series such as *Batman*, *Ren & Stimpy* and *The Simpsons*.

2. UNIQUENESS. Many animated series' feature funny animals in humorous adventures (*Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, *Biker Mice from Mars*, the various Disney afternoon offerings, etc.), but *SWAT Kats* is different. The Tremblay brothers and Hanna-Barbera realized that animal characters and serious action/adventure stories are two great tastes that taste great together, and this gave *SWAT Kats* a different tone than most of its competition. (The only two vaguely comparable shows around are ABC's *Sonic the Hedgehog*, with its *Star Wars* theme of rebels vs. tyrants, and the "grim and

gritty" current version of *Ninja Turtles*.)

3. AN EXCELLENT VOICE CAST. The producers of *SWAT Kats* assembled a virtual Who's Who of the best voice actors in American TV animation. If you don't recognize at least half the names of the cast, you probably shouldn't be reading ANIMATO! in the first place.

4. EXQUISITE ANIMATION. Hanho Heung-Up (whose credits include *Tale Spin*) did nine episodes of *SWAT Kats*, and they look pretty good. Mook (who have done several features in Japan) did 14 episodes, and they look great. Suddenly Hanna-Barbera, the home of limited movement, was producing a show whose animation frequently approached feature film quality. ("*The Deadly Pyramid*" and "*Unlikely Alloys*" are especially impressive.)

5. OVERALL QUALITY. The people who made *SWAT Kats* weren't just cynically marking time while they waited for jobs on a better show. They cared, and their devotion shows in the finished product. This, more than anything else, is what has attracted animation fans to *SWAT Kats*.

And now, let's get down to specifics, beginning with our cast of characters.

THE HEROES

T-Bone, AKA Chance Furlong (Charlie Adler): The *SWAT Kats*' fearless air ace, the best—and toughest—pilot in the sky. T-Bone's flying and fighting skills make him "a criminal's worst nightmare" in the air or on the ground. In his spare time, he enjoys watching *Scaredykat* cartoons and reading *Kat Kommandoes* comic books. (I wonder if he reads ANIMATO!?)

Razor, AKA Jake Clawson (Barry Gordon): The *SWAT Kats*' "high tech edge", an inventor who designs the team's vehicles and weapons. An effective fighter, Razor is also a "sure shot" who can nail the most elusive criminal with the Turbo Kat's missiles, which contain such gimmicks as circular saws, drill bits and capture nets. Razor's catch phrase is "Bingo!", which he often shouts when the missiles connect.

Mayor Manx (Jim Cummings): The titular leader of Megakat City, an old-fashioned pol who sounds like W.C. Fields with an Irish accent. He's cowardly and slightly corrupt, he wears an unconvincing toupee, and he puts at least as much effort into his golf game as running the city, but he's basically a likable comic relief character.

Commander Feral (Gary Owens): The leader of the Enforcers, Feral is courageous and honest, but he's also arrogant, ill-tempered, narrow-minded, stubborn and rude. Worst of all, he regards the *SWAT Kats* as reckless

vigilantes who are as dangerous as the villains they fight. Feral is indirectly responsible for the formation of the *SWAT Kats*; as shown in "*The Wrath of Dark Kat*", he fired Clawson and Furlong from the Enforcers when they supposedly let the supervillain Dark Kat escape (an incident that was actually Feral's own fault).

Deputy Mayor Callico "Callie" Briggs (Tress MacNeille): Mayor Manx may have the title, but Callie, his attractive young troubleshooter, is the one who really runs Megakat City. She's also the *SWAT Kats*' most powerful ally, although the TV series has never revealed how their friendship started. Callie has a secret communications link with the *SWAT Kats* that allows her to call them into action, and she defends the heroic pilots whenever Commander Feral criticizes them. Also, Callie copes with danger better than Manx or Feral, because she's braver than Manx and smarter than either of them.

Ann Gora (Candi Milo): An intrepid TV reporter for "*Kat's Eye News*" who often risks her life to cover the *SWAT Kats* adventures.

Dr. Abby Sinian (Linda Gary): A historian and archaeologist who works for the Megakat City Museum of History. She occasionally helps the *SWAT Kats* and Callie Briggs gather information on supernatural villains.

Mr. Young (Robert Ito): A corporate head who might someday do a big project in Megakat City—if those darned supervillains would just stop getting in the way.

Lt. Felina Feral (Lori Alan): A gung-ho Enforcer who happens to be Commander Feral's niece. Her uncle tries to keep her out of danger, but this macho warrior woman insists on storming into the thick of each battle. Like Callie, Felina realizes that Megakat City needs the *SWAT Kats* and is willing to work with them.

THE RECURRING VILLAINS

Dark Kat (Brock Peters): This criminal mastermind resembles a feline Darth Vader or Dr. Doom, thanks to his imposing physical presence (especially the hood and cape) and resonant voice. He specializes in plotting, scheming, and manipulating others into doing his will. Dark Kat's goal is to destroy Megakat City and replace it with a "capitol of crime" called Dark Kat City, "where lawlessness is the law of the land!" (Lance Falk: "Dark Kat doesn't want to steal money—he wants to be on money.") He's assisted by a group of chattering, batwinged creatures called *Creeplings* (whose noises are made by Charlie Adler).

Dr. Viper (Frank Welker): A mad scientist who was accidentally mutated into a half-kat/half-reptile creature—and likes it that way. As shown in "*Destructive Nature*," Viper plans to create "A spectacular new Megakat City! No more ugly metal and plastic, only beautiful



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swamp, ruled by me! Dr. Viper's Megaswamp City—it will be so beautiful!" To make this twisted dream a reality, Viper mutates ordinary plants, reptiles and insects into hideous, kat-eating monsters under his control.

The Metallikats: Also known as the married gangsters **Mac Mange** (Neil Ross) and **Molly Mange** (April Winchell). These feline felons died while escaping from prison, but the kindly, naive inventor **Professor Hackle** (George Hearn), who had no idea who they were, found them and transferred their minds into powerful robot bodies. The result: two heavily armed mechanical mobsters with attitudes. Mac and Molly are unquestionably evil, and they argue and insult each other constantly, but deep down they really love each other. They're the most entertaining members of the *SWAT Kats* rogues' gallery.

The Pastmaster (Keene Curtis): An 800-year old sorcerer whose magical pocket watch functions as both a time travel device and a weapon that shoots energy beams. This medieval miscreant brings monsters from the past (like dinosaurs and mummies) into the present to do his bidding.

Hard Drive (Rob Paulsen): A cyberpunk "technology pirate" who wears a "surge coat" that gives him the power to steal secured computer files, control vehicles, and turn into a pure energy form that can travel through power lines. The suit has one other interesting feature: when Hard Drive puts it on, his normal hairstyle automatically changes into a mohawk!

Burke (Mark Hamill) and **Murray** (Charlie

Adler): These two aren't supervillains, but they're almost as annoying. They deliver salvage to Jake & Chance's Garage, and they always take a moment to pester Clawson & Furlong about their status as officially disgraced ex-Enforcers.

THE EPISODE GUIDE

1. THE PASTMASTER ALWAYS RINGS TWICE

Airdates: September 11/12, 1993

Written by Glenn Leopold

When two grave robbers accidentally free the Pastmaster from his 800-year imprisonment, he steals his "Tome of Time" spellbook from the Megakat City Museum of History and attempts to change the metropolis back to the Dark Ages form he prefers. The wicked wizard summons dinosaurs through a magical "time vortex" to act as his bodyguards, one of whom knocks the *SWAT Kats* through the portal into the prehistoric era. Can our heroes fight their way past the dinosaurs, return to the present and stop the Pastmaster before time runs out? This may have been chosen as *SWAT Kats*' premiere episode because its use of dinosaurs was very timely in the wake of *Jurassic Park*. It's okay, but not the best possible introduction to the series. **B**

Trivia: 1. Most *SWAT Kats* episodes are preceded with a clip of an action scene from the story, with Razor's voice saying "Today on *SWAT Kats*...". Since "Pastmaster..." was the

first episode aired, it has a different beginning, intended to introduce the series, in which Razor narrates a brief overview of the *SWAT Kats* format over an assortment of clips (all from "The Giant Bacteria," except for one closeup of the Pastmaster from this episode).

Appearances: Dr. Abby Sinian has a strong supporting role in this episode.

2. THE GIANT BACTERIA

Airdates: September 18/19, 1993

Written by Glenn Leopold

Dr. Viper turns his fellow evildoer Morbulus (Jim Cummings) into the title creature, which then goes on a predictable rampage through Megakat City (and inconveniently divides into two anytime it's hit). Viper's reason for creating the monster is so it can break into the "impenetrable" Megakat Biochemical Labs and steal a chemical he wants. (Oh well, he's a mad scientist—his evil plots don't have to be logical.) This was the first *SWAT Kats* to be completed, and it's worth watching because it sets up many of the show's key elements. Unfortunately, it's also the series' most violent and horrific episode. After Morbulus' agonizing transformation, the bacteria monster(s) eat a farmer and his cow, Viper's old colleague Dr. Zyme (Paul Eiding), and—in a shocking scene I can't believe the censors allowed—ate a subway car full of passengers. Yes, *SWAT Kats* is a violent show where characters sometimes die (often for no compelling dramatic reason), but "Bacteria" goes way too far. Therefore, I must make an example of it. **D+**

Musings: 1. There is one good thing about this episode—an amusing scene where Chance moons over Callie when she brings her car to Jake & Chance's garage.

2. "Bacteria" also wastes a potentially good villain by killing off Morbulus as soon as he's introduced. Morbulus is even given a distinctive shtick—he literally has eyes in the back of his head, which gives him 360 degree vision. This is presumably so all the bacteria monsters (there are eventually three) can have eyes after they divide.

Trivia: Morbulus was originally called Oculus, but it was discovered that there had already been a *Fantastic Four* villain with that name. As a result, all the original dialogue featuring the name "Oculus" had to be re-dubbed.

3. THE WRATH OF DARK KAT

Airdates: September 25/26, 1993

Written by Jim Stenstrum

When Dark Kat steals the material for a homemade nuclear bomb to destroy Megakat City, neither the *SWAT Kats* nor the Enforcers

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can break through his defenses. Commander Feral tries to sneak aboard Dark Kat's ship (a plan even he admits is "desperate and stupid") and quickly gets captured. The ambitious Lt. Steel (Hal Rayle), Feral's yuppie scum aide-de-camp, would rather advance his career than rescue his boss, so it's up to the SWAT Kats to save both Feral and Megakat City. A suspenseful, exciting episode, but what makes it special is a flashback sequence that shows as much of the SWAT Kats' origin as we're ever likely to see—which is why this should have been the first episode broadcast. **A**
Appearances: Burke & Murray appear in the flashback.

4. DESTRUCTIVE NATURE

Airdates: October 2/3, 1993
Written by Lance Falk
The 300-story Megakat Tower office building is about to open for business, but its first tenant is a most unwelcome one: Dr. Viper, who seizes the structure with his army of monstrous, acid-spitting "plantimals." He places a huge "spore pod" on top of the penthouse; when it explodes, it'll cover Megakat City with spores, turning the metropolis into the "Megaswamp City" of Viper's fantasies. Obviously, the SWAT Kats can't allow this. While T-Bone runs interference in the Turbo Kat, Razor sneaks into the building and tries to stop Viper—with the help of Callie Briggs, who happened to be in the tower when it was taken. Like the *Outer Limits* classic "Demon With A Glass Hand" (which also concerns a man and a woman trapped inside an office building fighting evil attackers), this is a vibrant, briskly paced thriller that increases the tension by restricting much of the action to a confined space. This is also Dr. Viper's best solo appearance; he's almost funny as he continually tells his grotesquely mutated creations how "beautiful" they are. **A+**
Appearances: Mr. Young's debut is in this episode. Mayor Manx tries to persuade him to house his corporate headquarters in Megakat Tower; of course, the less-than-civic-minded Viper ruins Manx's plans.
Lance Falk: Falk was a unit head for H-B's art department who wanted to get into writing (he'd previously done four spec scripts for *Star Trek: The Next Generation*). ; he was also one of the artists who attended the SWAT Kats development meetings. Davis Doi (who had worked with Falk on *Capitol Critters*) allowed him to pitch ideas for SWAT Kats, all of which Doi liked, and "Destructive Nature" became Falk's first produced script (and the first of six SWAT Kats episodes Falk would write). "I wanted to do a Die Hard-like thing. Originally I didn't have Dr. Viper, I had a different villain—I called him Leiter Greenbox [a named Falk reused in "Chaos in Crystal" and "Unlikely

Alloys"]. In Falk's early outline, Greenbox creates the plantimals, who go berserk and cause an accident that turns him into a half-plant/half-kat creature, but the plot is otherwise similar to the finished episode. "Davis said, 'We've already got a mad scientist—just make it Dr. Viper.' It made more sense to me—'Yeah, bring the guy back'". After the episode aired, Falk learned that his script was open to some unusual interpretations. "Somebody told me after the show was on, 'Man, that show was so dirty! You have this big, tall building, like this phallic symbol, and then this big thing that's going to explode on top of it and spread seed all over the city'. When I was writing it, it never occurred to me, but now I can't *not* see it like that."

5. THE METALLIKATS

Airdates: October 9/10, 1993
Written by Jim Stenstrum
For the first time since their posthumous "complete makeover," The Metallikats are back in Megakat City and planning to "tear up this town like a scratching post!" However, Mac and Molly's first priority is "rubbing out that crud Mayor Manx," because they think denied their parole. It's mayhem in the mayor's office as the SWAT Kats fight to save both Manx and Callie from the mean machines. This is a SWAT Kats classic, thanks largely to the villains, who play their unique shtick (Bonnie & Clyde meet Al and Peg Bundy—as robots) to the hilt. Valiant Callie also gets a powerful moment when she tells the Manges that she, not the Mayor, denied their parole ("Manx hasn't done an ounce of paperwork around here for years!")—and almost pays for it with her life. **A+**
Musings: The theme of villains returning from the dead and seeking revenge was used often on SWAT Kats. Other variations on the theme include "The Pastmaster Always Rings Twice," "The Ghost Pilot," "Enter the Madkat" and "The Origin of Dr. Viper."

6. BRIDE OF THE PASTMASTER

Airdates: October 16/17, 1993
Written by Glenn Leopold
Caught in one of the Pastmaster's time vortexes, the SWAT Kats are drawn back into the Dark Ages. They find the wretched warlock invading "Megalith City" with an army of magical monsters, threatening to destroy the town unless its leader—Queen Callista, Callie Briggs' lookalike ancestor—agrees to marry him. And that's not the only romantic complication: when Callista sees Razor pull a certain sword from a certain stone, she falls for him, causing T-Bone to become jealous. This fun episode that puts the SWAT Kats in unfamiliar territory, both physically and emotionally—this is the first time either of

them has a requited love interest. Queen Callista is as courageous, intelligent and likable as her present day descendant. (Tress MacNeille's excellent vocal performance, subtly different from her Callie Briggs voice, adds a lot to the Queen's appeal.) "Bride" also uses a clever framing device: the episode begins and ends with the SWAT Kats in mid-battle against two worm-like sea monsters who are attacking oil tankers. **A-**

7. NIGHT OF THE DARK KAT

Airdates: October 23/24, 1993
Written by David Ehrman
Dark Kat enlists Hard Drive to help him destroy both the SWAT Kats and their reputation; after the villains lure the pilots into a conveyor belt death trap, Hard Drive uses the stolen Turbo Kat to pose as the SWAT Kats and frame them as criminals. Good points: 1. Mook's animation is well done. 2. Callie has a strong role that tests both her courage and her trust in the SWAT Kats; she even gets to save their lives for a change. Bad points: 1. The clichéd "make the heroes look like villains" plot. 2. The whole death trap business. Dark Kat is foolish not to kill the SWAT Kats outright; even Hard Drive sensibly complains to his partner, "I still say you should have let me fry those two!" 3. Hard Drive's introduction is marred by a clumsy, contrived monologue meant to explain the "high-voltage lowlife's" powers to the audience. The verdict: I've seen worse, but this one needed one or two rewrites. **B**

8. CHAOS IN CRYSTAL

Airdates: October 30/31, 1993
Written by Lance Falk
An accident with an experimental diamond mining machine somehow transforms brutal convict Rex Shard (John Vernon) into a crystalline giant whose touch turns people and objects into crystal...and that's only the beginning of his new powers. Yes, it's another "giant monster" episode, but at least this time the creature has a unique gimmick (not to mention a personality). "Crystal" is also the first SWAT Kats set totally outside Megakat City—most of the desperate battle between Shard and the two fighter pilots takes place in the desert. Not a classic, but a decent way to kill a half hour. **B**
Appearances: The mining device's inventor is one Dr. Greenbox (*Terminator 2*'s Robert Patrick), who returns in the second season's "Unlikely Alloys."
Musings: Warden Cyrus Meece (Jim Cummings), whose greedy exploitation of his prisoners causes Shard's accident in the first place, is knocked onto his office floor and shattered after he's "crystallized" (which Falk intended as "poetic justice"). As the episode



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ends, every location Shard turned to crystal is shown changing back to normal—except the warden's office. No prizes for guessing why. **Lance Falk:** Falk planned to make Rex Shard another recurring *SWAT Kats* villain—backed up with two concepts that had never been used before. “What makes [Shard] a villain is his mean and criminal mind, and after the crystal incident, he’s so bent on getting the heroes back that he’ll go to any length to get some kind of edge, some kind of weapon or power. What I wanted to do was to bring him back three, four or five times, and each time he came back [he’d have] a different power. He’d escape from prison and dive into an experimental energy source and [become] a big fire demon...or a snow guy that freezes the city over. I would have done something more original than those things I mentioned; I thought the crystal guy was an original idea, and I want to come up with stuff just that cool. The other thing was, not only did [Shard] keep coming back with different powers, but every time out there’d be a price to pay the next time he came back. He’d lose an eye, so from then on when you saw the guy he had an eyepatch. And each time he comes back, he’s a little more beat up. He’s become a fanatic, and he’s lost all sight of everything but revenge, and it’s really destroying him.”

9. THE GHOST PILOT

Air dates: November 6/7, 1993

Written by Von Williams

The vengeful spirit of The Red Lynx (Mark

Hamill), an enemy air ace from “*Megawar III*,” returns from his watery grave to kill the descendant of the flier who put him there, The Blue Manx. Said descendant happens to be—you guessed it—Mayor Manx, the flier’s great grandson. Can even the *SWAT Kats* shoot down “the most evil pilot in history?” And can Mayor Manx overcome his cowardice—even to save his own life? Manx gets his biggest role of the entire series here, but it’s The Red Lynx who makes this episode a classic. The ghost pilot, with his grotesque character design and aura of creepiness, is one of *SWAT Kats*’ best one-shot villains, and he inspires the animators to create several wonderfully eerie images throughout the episode. **A**

Appearances: The ever-helpful Dr. Sinian discovers that only a relative of the Blue Manx (such as the Mayor) can destroy the Red Lynx.

10. METAL URGENCY

Air dates: November 13/14, 1993

Written by Lance Falk and Eric Clark

The Metallikats escape from their creator Professor Hackle, who intends to “program out all [their] criminal tendencies.” In search of their armored hovercraft, the Metallikat Express, Mac and Molly wind up at the salvage yard near Jake and Chance’s Garage—where they discover *SWAT Kats* headquarters! In a unique action scene, Clawson and Furlong, still in their civvies, must defend their own base from the robot gangsters. The *SWAT Kats* destroy the Metallikats’ bodies, but the tin-plated thugs

survive as two disembodied heads crawling around on spider-like legs, and they soon continue their rampage by taking over two huge space exploration robots. There’s mayhem aplenty in this episode, but there’s also some of *SWAT Kats*’ best dialogue, as well as two character-driven scenes involving Commander Feral. First, Feral and Callie Briggs finally have The Big Argument over the commander’s hatred of the *SWAT Kats*. Then Feral redeems himself at the end of the episode; in a powerful scene, he chooses his principles over a chance to capture his hated rivals. All this and a cameo by Hard Drive—who could ask for anything more? **A**

In-Jokes: 1. Early in the episode, Professor Hackle and the Metallikats watch the *SWAT Kats* capture Hard Drive on live TV, making a fool of Feral (as usual).

HACKLE: “Such senseless violence. It’s all so disheartening.”

MAC: “Wow, Molly! That Feral hates the *SWAT Kats* even more than we do!”

MOLLY: “Why shouldn’t he, Mac?

Those fighter jocks make him look stupid at least once a week!”

2. Hackle plans to turn the de-criminalized Metallikats into servants—Mac, a chauffeur, Molly, a housekeeper. He even buys uniforms which the Manges destroy when they escape his lab. However, Hackle must have had two spare uniforms, because they’re shown in the second season’s “Deadly Pyramid.”

Appearances: Burke & Murray harass Jake & Chance yet again while the Metallikats watch. (Mac refers to the four as “dueling lowlifes.” He should talk!) *Star Wars* fan Lance Falk says, “Comedy characters aren’t my forte. I put [Burke & Murray] in there just so I could meet Mark Hamill.”

Lance Falk: “I wanted to do a big, blowout episode, and I wanted to do something with Feral. I thought Feral was kind of one-dimensional.” Falk expanded on Feral’s personality in “Metal Urgency’s” finale, where the Commander refuses the defeated Metallikats’ offer to exchange the *SWAT Kats*’ secret identities for their freedom. “I wanted to show that jerk though he may be, he’s got a code—he has a line that he won’t cross, and that line is he doesn’t deal with scum. He doesn’t need to know anything bad enough to owe the bad guy. That moment is my favorite moment in the whole series, and I think it’s my best character writing for the show. I know it’s a kids’ cartoon, but that scene was really important to me, and all the other stuff was just a device to lead to that last scene.”

11. THE CI-KAT-A

Airdates: November 20/21, 1993

Written by Glenn Leopold

Cicada-like aliens (with pointed, kat-like ears!) take over MASA Space Center, turning scientist Harley Street (Robert Ridgely) and others into literally bug-eyed slaves as part of their plan for world conquest. It's up to the *SWAT Kats* to thwart the invasion—and T-Bone must fight his phobic fear of insects every step of the way. This self-conscious tribute to 1950's sci-fi thrillers is moderately enjoyable, but it's undone by the aliens' lack of personality—compared with the flamboyant Mutilor (from the second season's "When Strikes Mutilor"), the giant bugs aren't very memorable. The best things about this episode are Callie Briggs' brief fight scene with Dr. Street (one of her best heroic moments) and the unusually large role given to Ann Gora (who discovers the alien plot in the first place). **B**

In-Jokes: 1. "The Ci-Kat-A" reuses locations from two earlier *SWAT Kats* adventures when the alien leader feeds on energy at Megakat Nuclear Plant ("The Wrath of Dark Kat"), then creates a nest for its new brood in the penthouse of Megakat Tower ("Destructive Nature"). When Callie sees the nest she exclaims, "Not again! This building must be cursed!" MASA Space Center had also appeared briefly in "Destructive Nature."

2. Speaking of "Destructive Nature," Mr. Young has a silent cameo here. He and Mayor Manx fare even worse than in the earlier episode, getting covered with alien bug slime at the climax of the action.

12. ENTER THE MADKAT

Airdates: November 27/28, 1993

Written by Glenn Leopold

Insane comedian Lenny Rintail, whose mind snapped when he was turned down by *The David Listerbin Show*, lets himself be possessed by the vengeful ghost (yes, another one) of a medieval court jester who suffered a similar rejection hundreds of years ago. The result is Madkat (Roddy McDowall), a wisecracking, shapeshifting harlequin who uses his magical powers to kidnap the king, queen, knight and jester (AKA Mayor Manx, Deputy Mayor Briggs, Commander Feral and David Litterbin) one by one, then vanish into thin air before the *SWAT Kats* can stop him. Madkat's Beetlejuice-like stunts make for some wonderfully surreal action sequences, but he just isn't a memorable character—and for a comedian, he's not very funny, either. McDowall does a good job as Madkat, but an actor with more of an off-the-wall sense of humor (Dan Castellaneta? Micky Dolenz? Matt Frewer?) could have given the character the Joker-like personality he needed. And unlike his inspiration, David Litterbin (John

Byner) comes across as surly instead of amusingly sarcastic. **B**

Appearances: Lt. Steel, who somehow avoided getting fired after his irresponsible actions in "The Wrath of Dark Kat," assumes control of the Enforcers when Madkat captures Commander Feral.

Trivia: When "Enter the Madkat" aired during the first season, it ran with the wrong closing credits (from "Metal Urgency"), so guest voice actors McDowall, Byner and James Hong initially received no recognition for their work. The credits were corrected during the second season.

13. KATASTROPHE

Airdates: December 4/5, 1993

Written by Glenn Leopold

SWAT Kats concludes its first season with the supervillain teamup many fans had been waiting for, as Dark Kat, Dr. Viper and The Metallikats form "an invincible alliance of evil" with only one goal: "Destroy the *SWAT Kats*!" Can the *SWAT Kats* (and Manx, Briggs and Feral) take on four villains at once? And how long can these greedy, selfish evildoers cooperate before they start stabbing each other in the back? This episode has a lot to recommend it besides the Teamup—the pacing is just right, Mook's animation is great, Feral gives one of his best performances, and the end of the second act is a powerful emotional moment. Only some inconsistent writing in the third act (Dark Kat gives three contradictory orders within two minutes, and gives away his desire to betray his partners with two "slips of the tongue" to boot) keeps this from getting an A+. **A**

14. MUTATION CITY

Airdates: September 10/11, 1994

Written by Glenn Leopold

Dr. Viper floods Megakat City with a "hideous mutating ooze" that transmogrifies ordinary animals into (what else?) giant monsters. With the city submerged in slime and infested by huge, repulsive creatures, the *SWAT Kats* undertake the perilous mission of reaching Megakat Biochemical Labs, where they must retrieve an anti-mutagen that can change everything back to normal. Complications: 1. T-Bone, who can't swim, nearly drowns in the muck. 2. Later, T-Bone becomes a mutant when one of the monsters bites him. (T-Bone's having a bad day, isn't he?) 3. Viper eventually uses the mutagen to turn himself into a Godzilla-sized monstrosity. This is no classic, but it keeps your attention. It's also Felina Feral's debut episode—ironically, she's first seen rescuing Callie Briggs, whom she replaced as *SWAT Kats*' major heroine. **B**

Trivia: Callie's communications link with the *SWAT Kats* is supposed to be a secret, but here

she not only uses her communicator in front of Mayor Manx, but she also lets him use it as well.

15. A BRIGHT AND SHINY FUTURE

Airdates: September 17/18, 1994

Written by Glenn Leopold

The Pastmaster sends T-Bone and Razor to Megakat City's near future—a nightmare world where The Metallikats rule as fascist dictators, killer robots confine "non-metallic creatures" to slave labor camps, the *SWAT Kats*' friends are fugitive freedom fighters, and the *SWAT Kats*' future selves are dead. This is one of *SWAT Kats*' highlights; the story is intriguing, the team up of high tech and magical villains is unique within the series, Mook's animation is excellent, and the art staff really earn their pay in creating the dystopian setting. **A**

16. WHEN STRIKES MUTILOR

Airdates: September 24/25, 1994

Story concept by Christian and Yvon Tremblay
Written by Lance Falk

Mutilor (Michael Dorn), the four-armed, vaguely lobster-like leader of a pack of space pirates, plans to drain all the water from the *SWAT Kats*' world and sell it to a desert planet. The *SWAT Kats* and the Enforcers (especially Felina Feral) defend their homeworld by engaging the aliens in an epic battle that begins over Megakat City and ends on Mutilor's spaceship (which he stole from a kat-like race of pacifists called the Aquians). This exciting episode moves like a shot; once Mutilor starts his attack, the action barely lets up till the end. The theatrical Mutilor is one of *SWAT Kats*' most entertaining villains, and Traag (Christopher Smith), his sycophantic aide-de-camp, is also a fun character. One of the best episodes of *SWAT Kats*' second season. **A**

Trivia: "When Strikes Mutilor" is *SWAT Kats*' second alien invasion episode, and both here and in "The Ci-Kat-A" the writers go out of their way to avoid mentioning the name of the *SWAT Kats*' planet because they didn't want to raise the questions that might have resulted, such as what the world outside Megakat City was like, were there any intelligent species besides kats, etc.

In-Jokes: Lance Falk derived the name "Mutilor" from an unusual source: some goldfish once owned by his friend Chris Otsuki, now a director at Warner Bros. TV Animation. "Because they were such little, harmless, stupid-looking things, I gave them ridiculous, tough names." These included Galactus (after the *Fantastic Four* villain), Bruno the Orangutroid—and Mutilor. "Years later, I'm doing this show and I needed a name for this big, lobster-like villain, so I named him after Chris' goldfish because the name worked, so there's

no point in not using it."

Lance Falk: After the *SWAT Kats* free the Aquians, their leader Captain Grimalkin (Michael Bell) tells the pilots that his peaceful crew won't help fight Mutilor. In the finished episode T-Bone replies, "Hey, I can respect that, but we have to get your ship out of Mutilor's hands. He's destroying our world!" Falk had intended T-Bone to criticize the Aquians: "You've got a responsibility to clean up after your own messes," he says to them in an early draft. "You made this dangerous toy, and this toy is going to kill us, so you'd better help us!" An H-B executive caused the scene to be changed. Also, Falk wanted to give "Mutilor" a provocative conclusion. "I thought the twist ending made the story like the Feral scene made 'Metal Urgency.' The pacifist aliens were originally all wearing helmets and you couldn't see what they looked like, because Mutilor took over their ship, and he changed the atmosphere to suit himself so it was poisonous to the actual owners of the ship, so they had to wear space suits. [The *SWAT Kats*] rally these aliens, they free the ship, they get the bad guy, and at the very end, the saucer's taking off and the little computer voice says, 'Okay, the environment's back to normal,' and the [aliens] look at each other and one says 'Wow! A planet of intelligent cats! How interesting!' and the other guy says, 'Well, it's a big universe. Anything is possible.' And they pop their helmets off and they're human! And then you back away and you see an American flag on the wall, and what you're seeing in one fell swoop is that *SWAT Kats* is absolutely [set] on another planet in the future. I thought that would have blown people out of their seats if they saw that, but one of the executives said 'Naah, I don't get it. Just make them cat aliens.' And that cheesed me off quite a bit."

17. RAZOR'S EDGE

Airdates: October 29/30, 1994

Written by Mark Saraceni

Razor's self-confidence is shattered when he believes that he injured two elderly civilians during a battle. Will he become discouraged enough to quit the *SWAT Kats*, leaving T-Bone to face Dark Kat's latest evil plot alone? Saraceni, co-developer to its companion series. His script emphasizes characterization (a sadly rare occurrence on *SWAT Kats*), and acknowledges that the violence surrounding our heroes has to affect them sooner or later. Speaking of violence, Saraceni also offsets the usual trash-the-city mayhem with a funny, cleverly staged hospital fight scene. His only misstep is the tiresome plot device of Dark Kat having a stupid henchman who accidentally gives his scheme away. A

18a. CRY TURMOIL

Airdates: November 5/6, 1994

Written by Lance Falk

Turmoil (Kath Soucie), a harshly beautiful villainess in a Nazi-like uniform, attempts to conquer the skies of Megakat City with a powerful airship, a squadron of female fighter pilots and a disorienting "vertigo beam." When T-Bone withstands these obstacles, Turmoil is so impressed (and smitten) that she offers him a job as her flight commander—but first he must prove his loyalty by killing Razor. The first *SWAT Kats* short (and the only one originally planned as a half-hour episode) has a familiar plot, but compensates with the unusual relationship between T-Bone and Turmoil: he's genuinely attracted to her ("She's kind of cool, in a nasty sort of way"), but his duty to stop her is clear. (So much for T-Bone's crush on Callie Briggs, a running gag during the first season.) B+

In-Jokes: When Lance Falk pitched "Cry Turmoil" to the Tremblays, they had already conceived "The UFO Story," which eventually became "When Strikes Mutilor." Falk saw that the ideas were similar: "They're [both] about a big, giant aircraft that has a lot of little fighter aircraft in it, and there's a main bad guy on the big aircraft, so they're structurally the same. [The *SWAT Kats*] fight their way through the defenses, go inside, beat the villain, and that's the end." Falk was chosen to write both episodes in order to make them as different as possible. As a reference to the situation, he named his villain "Turmoil"—which is an anagram of "Mutilor."

Lance Falk: "I created [Turmoil] because outside of Molly [Mange], we didn't have any female villains, and even Molly, as good a villain as she is, is half of a team." Falk originally conceived "Cry Turmoil" as a "bookend" to "Metal Urgency," in which he depicted Commander Feral as a character with integrity: "I wanted to show that he could be a really bad guy under the right circumstances. At the very beginning of the episode, Feral is made a bigger fool than ever by the *SWAT Kats*. He loses his cool and gets fired. Turmoil is impressed with him in spite of all that. She sees that 1. He knows all the city's weak points, 2. He's as mad at the *SWAT Kats* as she is, 3. She finds him virile and manly, and 4. He's got nothing to lose by joining her, because he just got drummed out." Feral joins with Turmoil, just as T-Bone does in the finished episode. But unlike T-Bone, Feral really does become a villain: "He's not just pretending, not just waiting for the right moment to turn the tables on her." When Feral realizes that the *SWAT Kats* are going to beat Turmoil, "He turns on her out of self-interest and says I was planning to do this all along," and at the end only Feral and the audience know the truth. Falk's idea was changed by an H-B executive who said, "The show's about Razor and T-

Bone, so make her fall in love with T-Bone instead." Falk says this changed the tone of the episode: "It's possible that Feral would be bad, but it's never possible that T-Bone would ever betray his partner, so there's nothing suspenseful about it." As for Commander Feral, he doesn't even appear in the final version of "Cry Turmoil."

18b. SWAT KATS UNPLUGGED

Airdates: November 5/6, 1994

Written by Glenn Leopold

Hard Drive uses a stolen "anti-weapon scrambler" to deactivate the Turbo Kat's weapon systems. "We can't fight him, so we're going to have to outwit him," Razor declares, eloquently summarizing the simple plot of this *SWAT Kats* super short. It's only 7:15 long, which isn't nearly enough time to develop a compelling adventure story. Everyone tries their best, though. B-

Appearances: This is supposed to be Hard Drive's solo showcase, but even here he has to share screen time with a second villain: Chop Shop (Nick Chinlund), a loudly dressed thief with pink hair and an annoying laugh who is quickly caught by the *SWAT Kats* and never seen again.

In-Jokes: When Ann Gora asks the *SWAT Kats* why they do what they do, T-Bone paraphrases a famous line from Raymond Chandler's essay "The Simple Art of Murder" when he answers, "We have a mission, Ann. Down these mean skies a kat must fly."

19. THE DEADLY PYRAMID

Airdates: November 12/13, 1994

Story concept by Christian and Yvon Tremblay

Written by Glenn Leopold

Every action/adventure cartoon does a mummy episode, but leave it to *SWAT Kats* to top the other series with an army of mummy commandoes as big as a small building. They're controlled by the Pastmaster, who unearths them from "the lost pyramid of Katchu-Picchu" as part of his latest attempt to take over Megakat City. When one of the monsters knocks off Callie Briggs' glasses, the sorcerer finally sees her resemblance to his beloved Queen Callista ("Bride of the Pastmaster"), so he kidnaps her and starts the whole "You will marry me!" business all over again. As in "The Giant Bacteria," the plot is pretty basic and the violence is excessive, but "Pyramid" has some good points. It's *SWAT Kats*' best-looking episode; Mook's animation here is among the finest ever done for an American television program. Callie has never looked better (which almost makes up for her being relegated to damsel-in-distress status in this story). And the underused Dr. Sinian gets her most active role of the whole series. B+

Appearances: Another member of "Pyramid's" crowded cast is Professor Hackle, making his only appearance in an episode without the Mettiks. Cybertron, a plucky, R2D2-like robot who protects the pilots and their friends. Considering the dismal track record of plucky, R2D2-like robots in TV animation, Cybertron is surprisingly tolerable, even almost likable.

20. CAVERNS OF HORROR

Airdates: November 19/20, 1994

Story concept by Christian and Yvon Tremblay
Written by Glenn Leopold

When the *SWAT Kats*, Felina Feral and Ann Gora search for some missing miners in the caverns beneath Megakat City, they soon find the cause of the disappearances: rock scorpions who have been mutated into gigantic, kat-eating monsters by illegally dumped toxic waste. As with "*Bride of the Pastmaster*" and "*Chaos in Crystal*," this tale's setting is a welcome change of pace from all the "*Megakat City under attack*" episodes. The heroes' underground journey is interesting in its own right, and it also means that the Turbo Kat must be used sparingly for once. But after all the buildup, in the end this is just another "*SWAT Kats vs. monsters*" episode. And *SWAT Kats* had done too many of those already. **B**

21a. VOLCANUS ERUPTS!

Airdates: November 26/27, 1994

Story concept by Christian and Yvon Tremblay
Written by Glenn Leopold

Mayor Manx and Mr. Young plan to build an industrial park on Anakata Island, the *SWAT Kats* equivalent to Hawaii. During construction, the ancient "fire demon" Volcanus (Frank Welker—no dialogue, just monster noises) is accidentally freed from his volcano prison. "Lava Lips" soon heads for the mainland and becomes the latest giant monster to stomp through the streets of Megakat City, ho hum. There are only two things of interest here: Razor wears a nifty heat suit while battling the beast, and veteran character actor Clyde Kusatsu (*All-American Girl*) plays an islander who tries to warn Manx and Young about Volcanus. **C**

21b. THE ORIGIN OF DR. VIPER

Airdates: November 26/27, 1994

Written by Glenn Leopold

With *SWAT Kats* nearing its end, the mystery surrounding one of its major villains is finally solved in this flashback story. Dr. Zyme (who was killed in "*The Giant Bacteria!*") and his partner Dr. Elrod Purvis co-develop Viper Mutagen 368, a regenerative growth formula that the "idealistic fool" Zyme wants to donate to Megakat City but the greedy Purvis wants to sell to the highest bidder. While attempting to

steal the chemical, Purvis spills it on himself and seems to die, but the flawed formula causes him to revive as the murderous mutant we all know and hate. And when Viper endangers Zyme, Mayor Manx, Deputy Mayor Briggs and Commander Feral with his giant mutant mosquitoes, only the *SWAT Kats* can rescue them all. Easily the best of the *SWAT Kats* shorts, this is so densely packed with characters and subplots that it easily could have been expanded to a full-length episode. But then, how could we live without "Volcanus Erupts!?" **A-**

22. THE DARK SIDE OF THE SWAT KATS

Airdates: December 10/11, 1994

Written by Jim Katz

T-Bone and Razor enter a parallel dimension where evil counterparts of the *SWAT Kats* and Callie Briggs are conspiring with Dark Kat to blow up Enforcer headquarters. It's fun to watch the three evil twins verbally abuse each other, but this episode has little else to offer because Katz fails to take full advantage of the alternate universe concept. What if more of the good characters had been evil in the parallel world? What if some of the villains had been heroes? "Dark Side..." just isn't as good as such similar tales as *Star Trek's* "*Mirror, Mirror*" and *Darkwing Duck's* "*Life, The Negaverse and Everything.*" **B-**

Musings: One of this episode's best moments is a silent sequence in which both sets of *SWAT Kats* infiltrate Pumadyne (a high tech weapons company that appears in several other episodes) to retrieve the "mega-detonator" for Dark Kat's bomb. The good ones are content to sneak past the guards; the evil ones knock them out for the sheer sadistic pleasure of doing so.

23. UNLIKELY ALLOYS

Airdates: December 24/25, 1994

Written by Lance Falk

"*Chaos in Crystal's*" Dr. Leiter Greenbox (now voiced by Nick Chinlund) creates Zed (Charlie Adler), a "micro-brain repair unit" that can automatically fix any damaged machine. When the injured Metallikats use Zed to rebuild themselves, the device's programming is "contaminated with their criminal personalities." Zed begins absorbing other machines (including Mac Mange), builds an ever-growing armored body around itself that's eventually large enough to dwarf a skyscraper, and starts talking about "total world domination." The *SWAT Kats*, Dr. Greenbox and Molly Mange reluctantly team up and enter Zed's body in a desperate attempt to deactivate the metal menace from the inside. Molly predictably acts up, but Greenbox's reaction is even worse—overwhelmed by what his genius has produced, his mind snaps and he unites with Zed so they can take over the world

together! *SWAT Kats'* last episode (at least so far) is one of its best. Mook's animation is fantastic, the story is strong, the Metallikats' devotion to each other makes them semi-sympathetic characters, and Greenbox's transformation is effective even though it's too abrupt. All this and Commander Feral's first name is finally revealed, too! (It's Ulysses.) **A**
In-Jokes: The *SWAT Kats*, when they first encounter Zed:

T-Bone: "Crud! What is that thing?"

Razor: "Giant monster of the week?"

Lance Falk: "*Unlikely Alloys*," which was an unused idea from the first season, is Falk's favorite of the *SWAT Kats* episodes he wrote. "It was Davis [Doi's] idea to split the Metallikats up," says Falk, who had planned to have both Manges join the fantastic voyage inside Zed's body. "I [originally] had a big robot fight at the end, but Davis turned it into a love story. As bad as [the Metallikats] are, as much as they fight and bicker, they're willing to sacrifice themselves for one another. I thought that was a very strong idea, and the instant I heard it I was mad at myself for not thinking or it."

THE UNFINISHED EPISODES

Lance Falk was kind enough to give brief synopses of the three unfinished *SWAT Kats* episodes. All three scripts were written by Glenn Leopold.

TURMOIL II: THE REVENGE

Turmoil busts out of jail. It opens up in a women's prison, and this big mole machine comes out of the ground and [the prisoners] all pile into it. Turmoil busts out the entire women's prison, and they all work for her. She gets ahold of a massive laser satellite system, or a big death beam—I've forgotten exactly what it was. It's controlled from her fortress, which is a castle on top of a snowbound mountain. The *SWAT Kats* must scale the mountain and do all this snow fighting stuff. It's real James Bond-ish."

DOCTORS OF DOOM

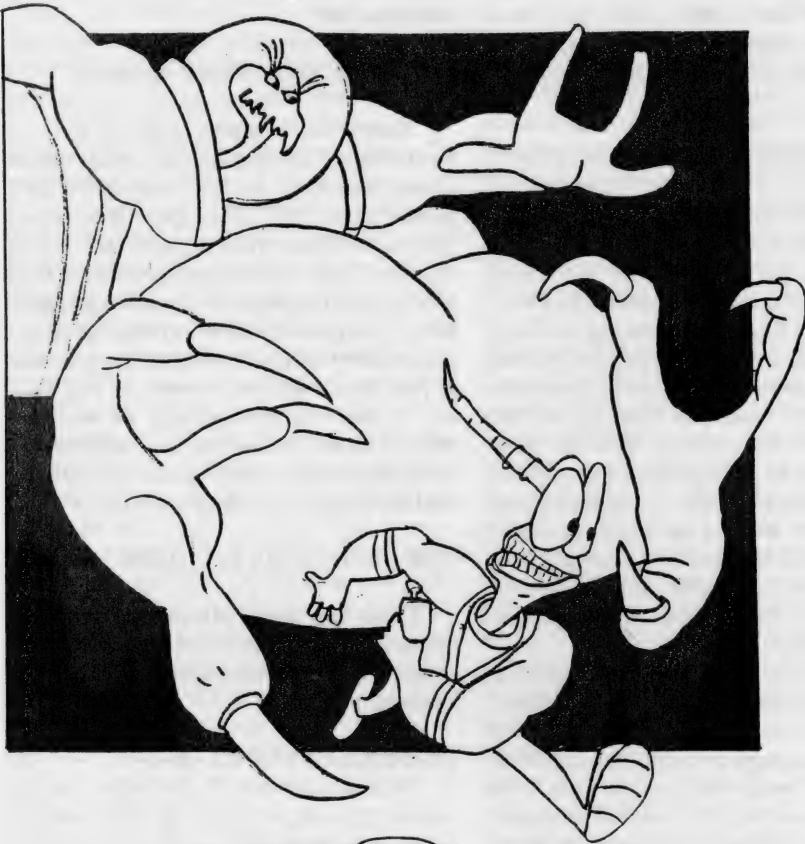
Dr. Viper teams up with Dr. Harley Street, the alien-possessed scientist from "*The Ci-Kat-A*" (hence the title). "They create a lot of monsters that have to be blown up within 22 minutes. I hardly remember that one."

THE CURSE OF KATALUNA

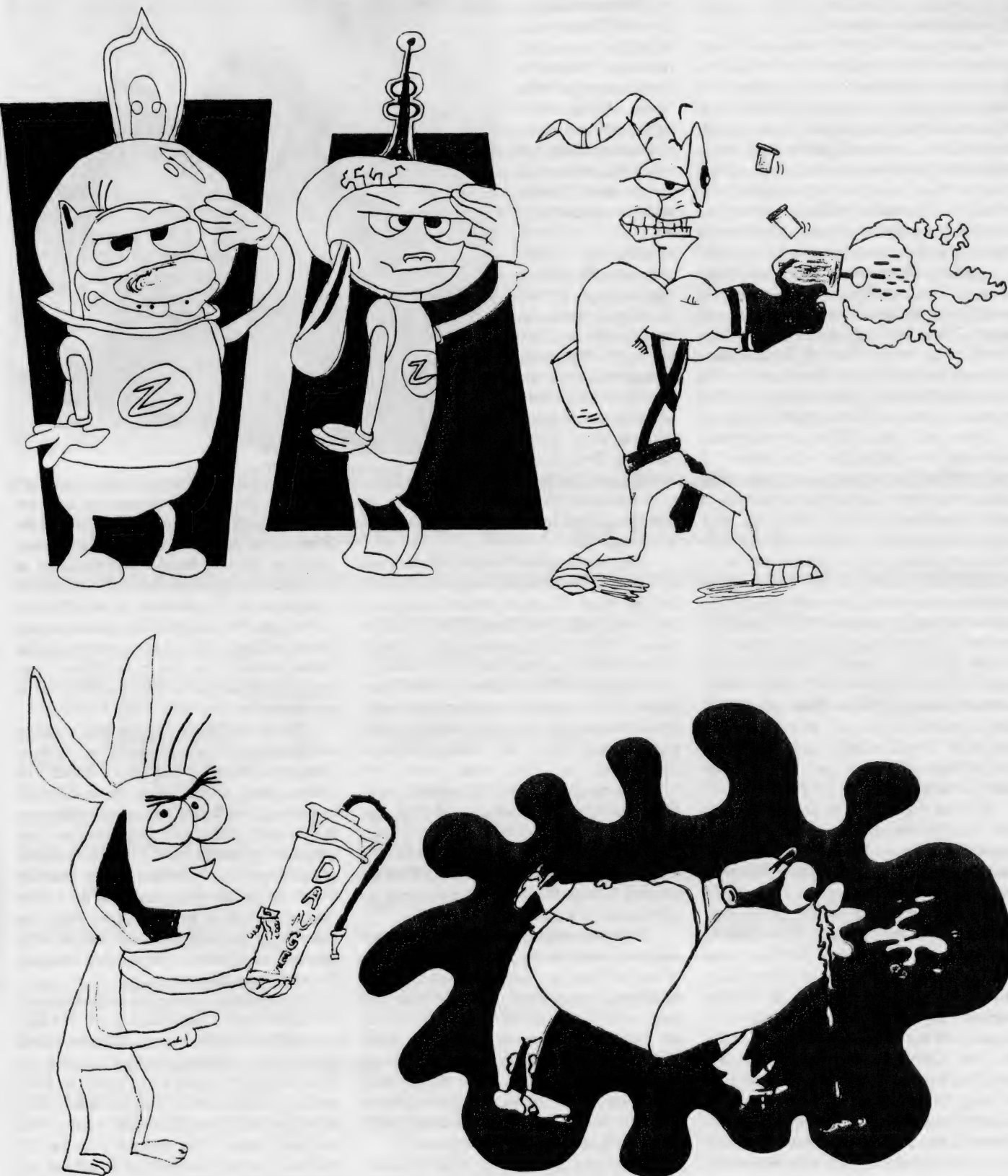
"It was a succubus story, about a woman that Commander Feral really had a thing for, and she was really draining the life out of him. He was getting older and older through the show, until he was practically a mummy at the end. [Kataluna] drained his energy and became

Continued on Page 71

Young Readers' Page



This issue of *Animato!* features the artwork of Alabama-born Brigham Martin. Thirteen-year-old Brigham loves animation, so he sent *Animato!* a few sketches of his favorite characters. Brigham has also made a stop-motion animation video and is the creator of *The Spit Bothers*, a comic we may share with *Animato!* readers in the near future. We love this stuff!



WHY DO I LIKE DISNEY?

Opinion by Andrew Osmond

Back in *ANIMATO!* #26, John Beam claimed the Western animated feature had lost the art of storytelling. "Plots and character development have been replaced by nifty technological advancement, prefab material with meaningless song-and-dance numbers, characters who mime the voice actors.....True creativity is not trying to do new things with animation, it's creating different stories and situations for original characters....(America) is lagging behind the Japanese in this department."

Last issue, Beam renewed this attack: "...the success of *The Lion King* proves conclusively good PR and media hype can bring in record receipts." Actually it only shows Beam and the Disney-going public have different tastes. Moreover, the problem with Western animation has nothing to do with bad storytelling: it's a reluctance to make different types of story.

Some quick points. What is so wrong with "characters who mime the voice actors?" I presume this refers to the practice of modeling characters on personalities, in the way *Aladdin's* genie is modeled on Robin Williams. Critics slam this as laziness, but surely it's the final effect that counts, not the process behind it. Williams' genie wasn't a hit with everyone but think of other characters generated by the process - *Baloo the Bear*, *Bernard and Bianca* from *The Rescuers*, Vincent Price's *Rattigan* - some of the best in Disney's canon. Moreover, many other characters tend toward a "cookie-cutter" sameness, a boringly bland stylization. The last point's particularly true of anime. I've lost count of the times I've had to look at hairstyles to tell different characters apart, especially the generic teenagers.

As far as Williams goes, it comes down to taste: if you like the comic, you'll like the genie, if you don't, you won't. But he doesn't unbalance *Aladdin*; the animators were careful to keep him as a supporting character, strategically limiting his involvement in the plot. (Remember, he's not even in the first third of the picture.) And there's no way to tell if Williams' one-liners date the film - yet. A lot of Warner Bros. caricatures (e.g. Bugs Bunny as Charles Laughton) are equally amusing whether you recognize the star or not. In any event, the idea that "true" Disney features are timeless is a myth. They date equally, as the incidental music and song routines date, as the themes and characterizations date, and as the social attitudes and morals date. *Snow White's* passive heroine and overt sentimentality date it far worse than any gagery.

Whatever else is the case, Beam can't be right in saying American animators are too concerned with "new things with animation" to worry about storytelling. For one thing, production reports show Disney animators are intensely worried about storytelling: the company ditched a whole rough cut of *Aladdin* precisely because the storyline didn't gel. Moreover, Japanese animators use whatever technical advances are at hand without their films suffering. Two of the best anime productions to be seen in the West, *Akira* and *Lensman*, use computer gimmickry to the same degree as their Western rivals.

On to wider issues. The first point to stress is that Disney's storytelling has advanced in the last few years. The most obvious change is in the movie leads. From *Snow White* through to *Alice*, *Wendy* through to *Aurora*, the "classic" Disney heroines are bland and lifeless, slowing their respective films appallingly. The Disney heroes of the time are no better, plot fodder whose sole purpose was to kill the dragons and save their beloveds. (Oddly enough, the major exceptions to this rule were the "anthropomorphic" leads: *Lady and the Tramp*, *Pongo and Perdita*, *Duchess and O'Malley*, *Tod and Vixey*.) The early Disneys are heavily lopsided toward villains, villainesses and comic support. Everyone remembers the witch and the dwarves in *Snow White*. The title character, by comparison, is a cipher.

Today the scriptwriters are trying to round out the romantic leads. The simpering bimbos of earlier films have been replaced by feisty, intelligent, teenage rebels. The male leads have become anti-heroic: the cursed beast, the "street-rat" *Aladdin*, the irresponsible *Simba*. Beam claimed moral failings make characters unsympathetic: rather, they make them interesting (doesn't Beam himself compliment anime for having the protagonist dealing with him/herself, rather than outside forces?)

The stories are better as well, with new characterizations ringing changes on the old



© 1994 Buena Vista Television

plots. The relationships between the leads are more complex: for example, *Aladdin* and the Princess no longer have a straightforward romance, but use disguise and deception to befriend each other. Admittedly, not all plot changes work. The treatment of social barriers in the same film was ruined by the let-out: the Genie can't make *Aladdin* into a prince, but the Sultan suddenly can. But to call Disney plots woefully thin, as did one *ANIMATO!* writer, is grossly unfair.

Nearly all Disney features are limited by the adventure/romance genres, but within those categories Disney is very good indeed. The writers place a high value on stories with beginnings, middles and ends, a balance between laughs and chills, and song routines that genuinely advance the plot. The source material is traditional, but the writers readily alter plot details as needed: the extension of the middle "castle" section of *Beauty and the Beast*, for example, or the background for *Aladdin* with *Jasmine* and *Aladdin's* first meeting changing the whole tone of the story.

So has Disney nothing to learn from anime? Of course it has! Disney features have felt very "samey" these past few years, mostly because of the West's growing exposure to anime: we have more to measure these American films against. It's also because Disney has just finished a "trilogy" of films (*Mermaid*, *Beauty* and *Aladdin*) that are, in fact, extremely similar. It's not that Disney's storytelling is bad, or the characterization poor: it's that the story and the

characters are the same each time.

Ditto for those song routines of which Beam is so critical. I don't think they have declined in recent years - again, it's all personal taste - but their similarity is beyond question. (Try comparing *Part of Your World*, *A Whole New World* and the main *Beauty and the Beast* theme.) It's not just that there's a common writing team: there's only so many romantic ballads and villainous routines one can do.

The reason for this "sameness" lies with what Haruhiko Mikimoto once called the "Disney Complex." The "Disney Complex", as I read it, is the belief that the only way to construct cartoon features is along the lines of the Disney "establishment classics" - the five major features before 1950 that made the company's reputation. Such films have to be sanitary, they have to be saccharine, and they have to have songs that rhyme. Back in the Fifties, this attitude caused Disney to bowdlerise literary classics like *Alice in Wonderland* and *Peter Pan* to the point of imbecility, in the belief that only then would they be suitable for a cartoon audience. A similar attitude is manifest in the "updated" ending of *Little Mermaid*. Even a supposedly "maverick" production like Bluth's *Secret of Nimh*

remoulded the Richard O'Brian novel in order to accomodate an evil villain, a swashbuckling hero, and an unequivocal happy ending.

The limitations of this "complex" are shown up by directors like Hayao Miyazaki. The first obvious point for comparison is that Miyazaki's films are longer, averaging over a hundred minutes in length, as opposed to the Western feature's seventy-five. The Japanese animators respect the attention span of the audience: they don't need a song or a piece of fancy pyrotechnics every five minutes. Both factors mean more time for exposition and the development of unfamiliar scenarios, in contrast to the threadbare plotting and thin characterization of most "offbeat" Western cartoons. (*All Dogs Go to Heaven*, *Rock-a-Doodle* and *Freddy as F.R.O.7* just leap to mind here!)

Anime doesn't have to rely on audience familiarity with a particular story or story type. One only has to watch *Aladdin* alongside a film like *Kiki's Delivery Service* or *My Neighbour Totoro*. *Aladdin* rides on the back of one of the best-known fairy tales, borrowing liberally from Spielberg and *Thief of Baghdad*; Miyazaki's films are wholly original, introducing the audience to places unknown to the cosmopolitan

Japanese - a European city, a Welsh mining community, Japan's own pastoral countryside. None of these films have many songs or action sequences, or even villains to speak of: they work beautifully outside those conventions.

I share Mr. Beam's hope that Western animators will follow anime's lead, and become more adventurous in their choices of stories in years to come. *The Lion King* for all its uncharacteristically mechanical scores and (alleged) plagiarism, treated its themes with a seriousness unheard of since *Fox and the Hound*. The success of teenage/young adult animations on TV, the growing penetration of anime into Western pop culture, and the funding of projects like *Nightmare Before Christmas*, *Toy Story* and the non-fairy tale *Pocahontas*, all point to a growing diversity in all levels of Western cartoons. But at the same time, I think it's worth emphasising the advances in storytelling that companies like Disney have already made in recent years. They need to remember that those advances are worth it, and build on their foundation.



Andrew Osmond is the British correspondent for ANIMATO!

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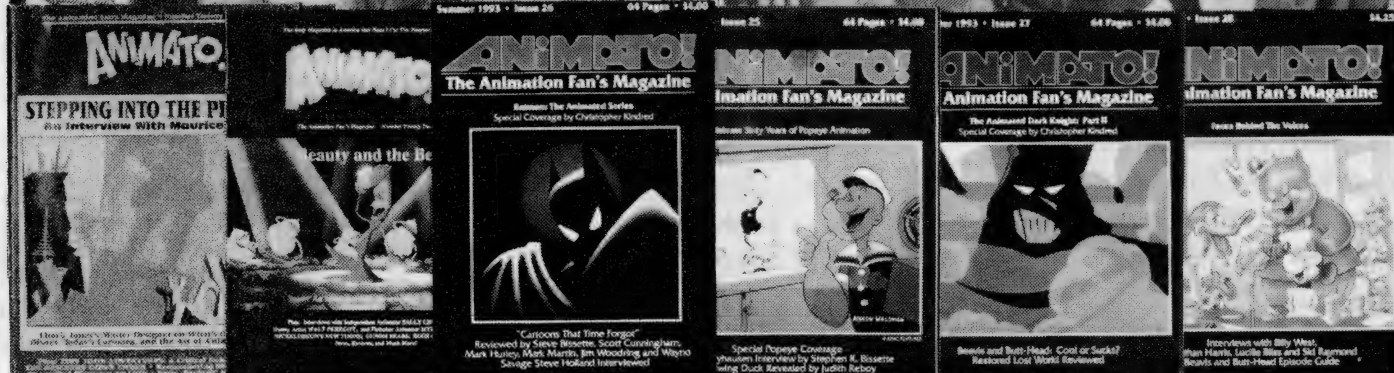
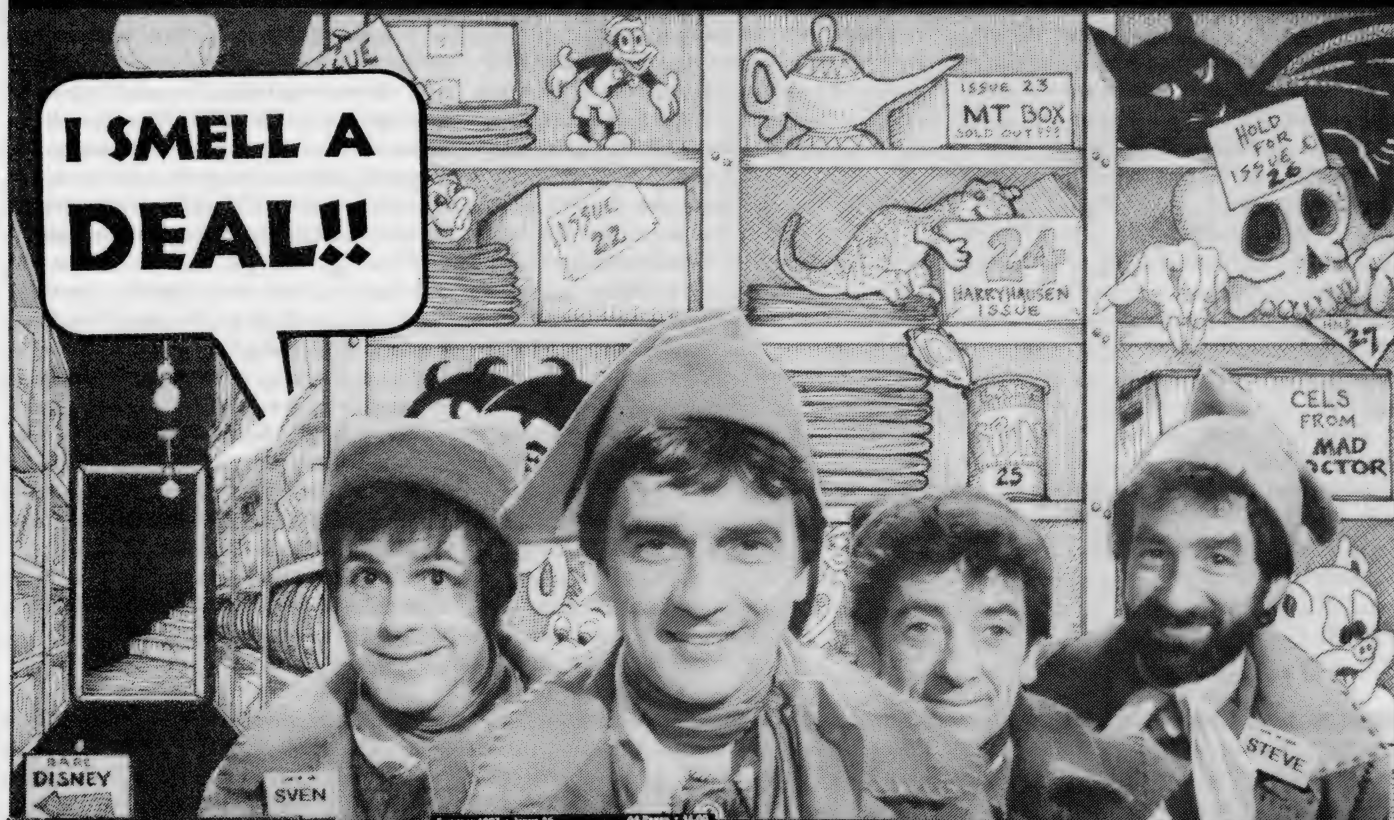
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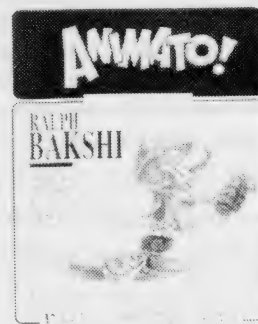
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Toons N' Tea

Continued from page 14

Like *Plague Dogs*, *When the Wind Blows* main asset is the splendid voice-acting, provided here by John Mills and Peggy Ashcroft, British personalities perfectly suited to playing the caricatures portrayed here. The film is based on Raymond Briggs' best-selling picture-book, and the same "look" is preserved here, albeit with visual frissons like a "psychadelic" holocaust and dream montages as the two look back on pre-apocalypse life. The script is lifted verbatim from Briggs' original, thankfully preserving all the classic one-liners ("I suppose they're having Sunday roast", Jim says innocently as he sniffs the radioactive air). No doubt it was the Briggs hook that secured the film's modest box-office, coupled with memories of T.V.C's Oscar-nominated *Snowman* short (also Briggs) three years earlier that, unusually, attracted parents as much as kids.

Despite this, *When the Wind Blows*, like *Plague Dogs*, has faded pretty much into obscurity. Perhaps the growing interest in "alternative" forms of animation will someday lead to these excellent productions being revived. It would be a great pity if we were never to see their like again: animation like this is too good just to waste on children. 

Fan Mail – From Page 3

Mouse. I understand that the first *Rescuers* was the biggest grossing film in Germany's history. How did *The Rescuers Down Under* the best of the two, do overseas? I'm looking forward to seeing Bernard and Miss Bianca in future Disney productions with a big product push behind them.

Kudos from Don

Thanks for the copies of ANIMATO! The article is excellent, the best that's been done on my career. I appreciate it very much.

It was all our pleasure, Don! GMD

More Foreign Coverage

Brian Yelverton
Salem, MA

Greetings, just wanted to send you a quick note congratulating you on the latest issue #31. I particularly liked the foreign animation report. I hope you can perhaps do an article on some of the shows that never get shown in the U.S. I recently got some copies of a series called Sandokan from England that was quite good.

Pat and I are looking for correspondents to

Bluto

Continued from page 18

bushy eyebrows and sporting a protruding stomach. He was mainly seen wearing a short-sleeved, blue, button down the front shirt. Brutus appeared in this fashion in the Popeye comic book No. #67 (the first comic book where he was called "Brutus"). However, after this issue, Sagendorf drew his own design of the "Brutus" figure. Now the bearded brute sported a small captain's hat, a scruffy beard, big eyes with wavy eyebrows. His costume was a short-sleeved shirt with a t-shirt underneath. It was this version of Brutus and the TV-cartoon design which appeared on the majority of Popeye-related merchandise during the 1960's and 1970's.

In 1978 Hanna Barbera produced a new series of Popeye films for Saturday morning television. The name "Brutus" was dropped, though the name was still being used in both the comic strips and books. It was now "Bluto" who was bothering Popeye, and Hanna Barbera used a Fleischer-looking visual for the character. This "Bluto" sported a captain's hat, had a full beard and wore a short-sleeved striped shirt. Yet another version of Bluto appeared for the

animated "Popeye and Son" series in 1987. This Hanna Barbera production featured a Bluto which looked similar to Sagendorf's Brutus design except that the bully wore a loud business suit.

Bobby London, who drew the daily "Popeye" comic strip for six years, wrote a story in 1991 titled, "The Return of Bluto". In this funny adventure, the Bluto of 1932 returns to get rid of all the guys who have been impersonating him and calling themselves, "Brutus". London really did his research for this story as he illustrated the many versions of the character (including the Italian version of Brutus) crowded together in one panel.

The next time someone asks you, when referring to an unidentified picture of Popeye's foe, "what's his name again?", it just may be safer to say, "Oh that's the big guy who hates Popeye." 

Fred Grandinetti is co-founder of the Popeye Fan Club and has written two books on the world's favorite sailor.

cover Japanese and European animation. For a report on Canadian animation see our new column by Stephen Cooke.

Information, Please!

Derek Carrow
Chapel Hill, NC

I would like information on two cartoons I saw as a kid that gave me nightmares for months afterwards. Both aired in the early-to-mid-Seventies on a PBS program called (best as I remember) *The International Festival of Animation*. Naturally, the parts that scared they whey out of me are the only ones I can remember now.

The first cartoon was some kind of history of fire. At the end, a careless homeowner starts a fire in his kitchen. The flames (anthropomorphized as leering demons) spread from house to house, neighborhood to neighborhood, and ultimately nation to nation. The cartoon ends with the earth a rolling ball of flame as the gods who gave fire to Man at the beginning, grouse "Next time, we'll give fire to the Woman!"

I clearly remember two scenes from the second cartoon. In the first scene, a grossly

obese man (the main character) sits at a table piled high with food. As he begins to gorge, his entire body sprouts hands and mouths. At the end of the scene, his head morphs into a steam-shovel bucket which devours the table and everything in it in one gulp.

Later Fat Boy somehow falls a great distance and lands among a group of cadaverous children who gather around him and stare. Suddenly, one dashes forward and bites into his arm. The cartoon ends with the children piling onto Fatso's struggling body, apparently to eat him alive.

Any information you can give me on these cartoons (titles, creators, etc.) would be appreciated. 

We love getting letters, but they must be signed and with your address. Send your letters to ANIMATO!, 17 Spruce St. Springfield, MA 01105. If you have an American On Line account, e-mail the magazine at Animato 22.

Animated Comics – From Page 27

much smoother. In the adaptation of the pilot episode, there is none of the melodramatic buildup for the introduction of Titanium Man, who is dispatched by Iron Man and War Machine as quickly as Godzilla does away with Bambi.

And I was pleased that the Scarlet Witch does her job and does not spend entire stories doing bad impressions of Natasha Fatale.

The Fantastic Four title has much more sophisticated character designs than its television counterpart, but since the series takes fewer liberties with the original characters, it reads more like an “untold tales” title. If you are a longtime FF reader, you may want to read this title, if for no other reason than this is currently the only place to read the adventures of the original foursome. (For the uninitiated, Doctor Doom finally killed Reed Richards in the comics, presumably killing himself as well. Doom’s adopted son subsequently took Reed’s place as the team’s scientist.)

Since much of the appeal of *Phantom 2040* is the distinctive artistic vision of Peter Chung, one wonders what Marvel was thinking when they hired the equally distinctive Steve Ditko to do the comics version. Like most artists, Ditko has his fans and his detractors (I must confess to being in the latter category.) but clearly, for a title which relies so heavily on the appeal of art direction, Marvel would have been better served to find someone who could draw like Chung!

Gone, too, from the comic book is the series’ apocalyptic feel. It’s kind of a shame, too, since although the series is a poor adaptation of Lee Falk’s *Phantom* universe, it is a fascinating story. Most Phantom fans I know especially take issue that Kit Walker Jr. shows

his unmasked face—an omen of death in the Falk version—to everybody.)

Ren and Stimpy is a very popular title for Marvel. Like its source material, it can be an acquired taste, although it tempers its body function humor with the occasional more subtle reference. Let’s face it, a *Ren and Stimpy* comic should absolutely not read like an issue of *Looney Tunes* in order to do justice to its fans. If *Ren and Stimpy* offends you, don’t even try it, but if it’s your bag, the comic pretty much does a good job.

Bongo Comics publishes various comics which all somehow tie in to *The Simpsons*. Among the characters they’ve spotlighted over the last year or two are *Krusty the Clown*, *Itchy and Scratchy*, *Radioactive Man* (a Homer lookalike who stars in Bart Simpson’s favorite comic) and Bart himself as the superhero *Bartman*. They’ve even done a title devoted to action movie star *McBain* (who looks and sounds suspiciously like a certain real life heavily accented box office champ.)

The Bongo artists take great pains to recreate Matt Groening’s characters faithfully, more importantly, the writers should be commended for doing some clever things with them. When, as comic book tradition demands, the Bongo characters began crossing over into each others’ books, the Simpsons kids found out the hard way that Itchy and Scratchy aren’t nearly as funny when it’s your house they’re destroying!

Spider-Man Adventures and *X-Men Adventures*, like the *Marvel Action Hour* titles, adapt the cartoon episodes into comic form, using the standard Marvel house style. However, unlike *Iron Man* and *Fantastic Four*, there are

already numerous *Spider-Man* and *X-Men* titles already on the stands.

They are good, reliable reads, but if you already buy the other books and you’ve already seen the television episodes adapted in these pages, wouldn’t you rather spend your money on something else?

One thing you might consider is *Tex Avery’s Wolf and Red*. Dark Horse Comics, which produces some of the darkest, grittiest media based comics in the market (i.e. *Aliens*, *Predator*, and *Robocop* and any combinations therein), seems to be an unlikely home for a Tex Avery comic. And it’s hard to imagine anything that would adapt worse to the printed page than the fast paced *Wolf and Red* shorts.

But against all odds, this book is wonderful. It captures the maniac spirit and sexual energy of the originals perfectly, as the lovely Red is pursued not only by “Wolfie” but every male in sight!

Each issue of this three issue miniseries features a back up story by other MGM stars like Droopy and Screwball Squirrel, and all the characters who have appeared thus far look and act blessedly like their original selves.

I’m sure that the politically correct will find much to complain about, but everybody else will have a good time. Run out and buy this now so that Dark Horse’s noble experiment will pay off.



Judith Reboy, really does care how the Scarlet Witch is treated on tv, and is a regular contributor to ANIMATO!

Space Ghost – From Page 31

spend more time using your cerebral energies for more important things, like what are you going to have for lunch?”

What does he do for fun?

“Fun is good! I think I can sum that one up in one word, Citizen Joe...Twister! Man, that twisters a swinging game! Zorak always wins. You tell Zorak ‘Blue-Leg’ and ‘Green-Arm’...errr...whatever that thing is, and no problem, he always wins.”

What does S.G. like about his show? “The fact that we’re still on! The fact that we actually all can show up and have such a fun time, and that we’ve had so many people say we are doing a good job, and that people enjoy the program and that people continue to watch.”

And what does he like least? “Still, the one thing that I like least, they haven’t fixed those red things on the cameras so you can see which one is on. Moltar did that. That’s his fault.

Moltar did that on purpose so I don’t know where I’m looking. He thinks it makes him cool. You know what it does? All it does is show that he has a lack of consideration for others. I told him that the first time I saw him hurl lava balls. I told him, I said, ‘You know, that shows a lack of consideration for others. If you were concerned about others you wouldn’t hurl lava balls!’”

One thing that stays in my mind as I think back over the chat I had with this strange video-visitor from another world, is that he, unlike some other aliens, doesn’t show a lack of consideration for others, unless of course you’re a BeeGee!



Joe Reboy, personal friend of Space Ghost, wrote about Savage Steve Holland in a previous issue of ANIMATO!



Toon Reviews From Page 6

which allows for; A black and white option, importing and exporting sound, screening cartoons without controls showing and the ability to link a series of shorts. Tall order.

The list price is \$54.95, but *Toolbox* is available in catalogs and stores for \$34.95 to \$39.95. An ideal gift for a child or crusty publisher.

I heartily recommend *Big Top's Cartoon Toolbox* starring *Felix the Cat* to anyone who hankers to create a cartoon. At the very least, you'll gain an appreciation for timing and editing. At its best, you'll have a ball exploring possibilities and creating cartoons in a little corner of the computer animation candy store.

PCD 

Hearing Voices— From Page 29

ears and re-immersing ourselves into the old-time radio milieu that so obviously fed the cartoons, many of their major voice contributors, and in quick succession, at last give credit to three of the major supporting players of the animated cartoons of the 30's and 40's.

And these are the 3 major ones! Thanks to Keith's continued supplying of old radio shows and experienced ear for voices, Graham's dogged determination to hold out til all facts present us the conclusive evidence, and the ANIMATO! space given to me to share the results, many more discoveries are occurring. We now lean toward Elmore Vincent for the Colviguesque voice at MGM, towards the energetic mimic Kent Rogers, tragically killed in WWII, for the great Gorcey voice used for Henry Hawk in *Squawkin' Hawk*, and Dick Nelson. Many more mysteries remain - The Gildersleeve voice in "*Hare Conditioned*" et al (Danny Webb? An announcer doubling?). The Fagan voice in *Fagin's Freshmen* (a beautiful blend of Lionel Stander and Phil Kramer) and many, many more. So stay tuned! 

Hames Ware is a voiceover artist and part-time cartoon detective.

History Lesson – From Page 40

let's do that in animation too. That's exactly what our goal was in this film."

This type of subtle animation is especially evident in one of *Pocahontas*' key sequences, in which John Smith and Pocahontas meet for the first time. Glen Keane first did storyboards of the scene, plotting it out very carefully, with the two characters meeting by a waterfall, then the animator brought a more personal element to it. "The more I thought about it, I said, 'Well, how did it work out for me, when I met my wife?'," Keane says. "It was kind of a love at first sight thing. I met her at a movie in 1972, on line to see *The Godfather*. We were both seniors in high school, this girl was standing behind me and I turned around and she was there and I don't remember anything that she said. But, I remember that whole time; I remember the orange blossoms in the air, I remember the temperature, the feelings that were there. I thought this is what this moment has to be. It has to be something bigger than life, beyond just these two people standing there."

Glen also adds, "The place where they met was very important. To have it in front of this waterfall, with just the roar of the waterfall

behind them, the mist slowly revealing Pocahontas, kind of like clouds swirling around, made it very ethereal." He says that Pocahontas' first reaction to John Smith is one of mixed emotion, "She knows that she wants to run, but she also knows that she wants to stay. She's been tracking and following him. There's this very subtle little thing, where her tension is just to lean off to screen right and run away, but, if you watch the scene, she slowly, very slowly, inches over to the left and her head drops down slightly, which says, 'I'm going to stay here for a moment'. Then, he moves a little bit, then she looks at his gun, he drops the gun. Everything is very, very subtle."

This ground-breaking, subtle artistry was definitely a new and exciting change for the studio, as Mike Gabriel adds with a laugh, "I think we've scared the hell out of a lot of the animators." Even though it's rooted in the past, *Pocahontas* looks as if it's an indicator of the future at Disney animation. 

Mike Lyons is a New York-based freelancer who frequently contributes to ANIMATO!.

Swat Kats – From Page 63

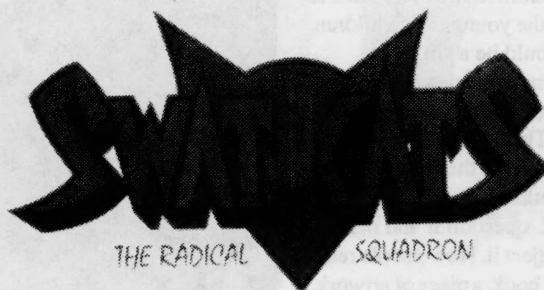
this big, huge harpy, and she had other harpy things that helped her, and they were terrorizing the city." The *SWAT Kats* became involved when a justifiably concerned Felina Feral called on them to help save her uncle. Kataluna was voiced by Nancy Linari, who had played Morticia on H-B's 1992-94 *Addams Family* series. "'Kataluna' was a real strong episode with another terrific female villain," Falk says. "It used Commander Feral more than any of the other shows that used him—it was really Feral's episode." Not surprisingly, Dr. Sinian also appears; after helping the *SWAT Kats* defeat *The Pastmaster* and *The Red Lynx*, she's an old hand at handling supernatural villains by now.

Finally, the Tremblays created a character that the *SWAT Kats* producers never used: Nimbus the Weather Warrior, who Flak describes as "a weather villain who rode a big motorcycle."

Thanks to Bodie Chandler, Davis Doi, Glenn Leopold, and Kris Zimmerman at Hanna-Barbera for their help. Special thanks to Lance Falk ("One thing I want to make sure you put into the article is: Davis Doi is the best boss I ever worked with") and John Zuker for consenting to be interviewed.

Any comments on this article? Write and tell me what you think! Mark Lungo, 7705 Ragall Parkway, Middleburg Heights, OH 44130-6414. 

Mark Lungo is a Cleveland-based freelance writer who has contributed to *Action Figure News & Toy Review*, *Collectible Toys & Values* and *Action Figure Collector*. This is his first article for ANIMATO!





A Word of Explanation

Some of the people who read **ANIMATO!** buy it at their local comic book shop. Because of the upheaval in the comics distribution industry, this issue may not get to our normal comics outlet. Naturally, since you're reading this, you've found the magazine, either courtesy of a subscription (thank you) or one of our newsstand/book distributors (thank you) or a means too arcane to explain in public.

Granted announcing this is not unlike speaking into a dead microphone, but I just wanted to point out that **ANIMATO!** is alive and quite well even if this issue won't be found in comic book shops. Pat and I hope that Issue 33 will indeed be distributed to the comics trade.

For years, the comic books shops were the principal retail outlets for **ANIMATO!** The magazine grew along with the companies which serviced the growing direct sales market. When Pat and I purchased the magazine, though, we were approached by several newsstand/bookstore distributors, and we quickly found that our readership was growing because the magazine was reaching people who would never set foot into a comics shop, but who love animation.

So for those of you who do get the magazine usually from a comic book shop (I'm speaking into that dead mic again), we're sorry for this interruption in your service. Be sure, though, to tell your friendly shop owner to order many copies of Issue 33!

I Learned Everything I Need to Know From Cartoons

This issue's story on censorship is sure to make some people question the effects of animation on children, and the problems of using what is perceived to be a child's artistic medium for adult material. There are people who would gladly see animation be relegated to material sanitized for the youngest of children, and this, of course, would be a sin.

The question remains just what kind of effect does animation (and film and television) have on its viewers? The answer is a difficult one: the effect depends upon the viewer. Some people just allow something to wash over them, while others engage it, question it and make a decision to accept or reject it. How people react to anything (a movie, a book, a piece of artwork,

music, etc.) is due to stimuli outside of that artifact. Your parents, teachers, family, peers and religious training are the factors which give you an emotional and intellectual framework from which to react.

Personally, my interest in animation and film has had a huge impact on me. My parents are ruggedly independent people who put a very high dividend on hard work and education. They encouraged me to pick a dream, follow it, and do something. When I fell in love with movies and animation, they were very supportive even though admittedly a little mystified. But hey, my father, who rolled his eyes up when I gabbed about such subjects, went out and bought me a wonderful movie camera so I could experiment with making my own animated films. Thanks, Mom and Dad.

Popeye, Roy Rogers, the Lone Ranger and Bugs Bunny were guides in my childhood, and they were replaced as I got older by the people who were making films that meant so much to me. The individual lessons I've learned came from people such as Max Fleischer who embodied much of the classic American dream. Emie Kovacs taught me the virtue of pushing the envelope and of daring to be not understood. Buster Keaton illustrated what can be done when you work under your own rules. These three are my patron saints.

Even more significant lessons have come from the people I've had the wonderful opportunity of calling "friend." Richard Gordon

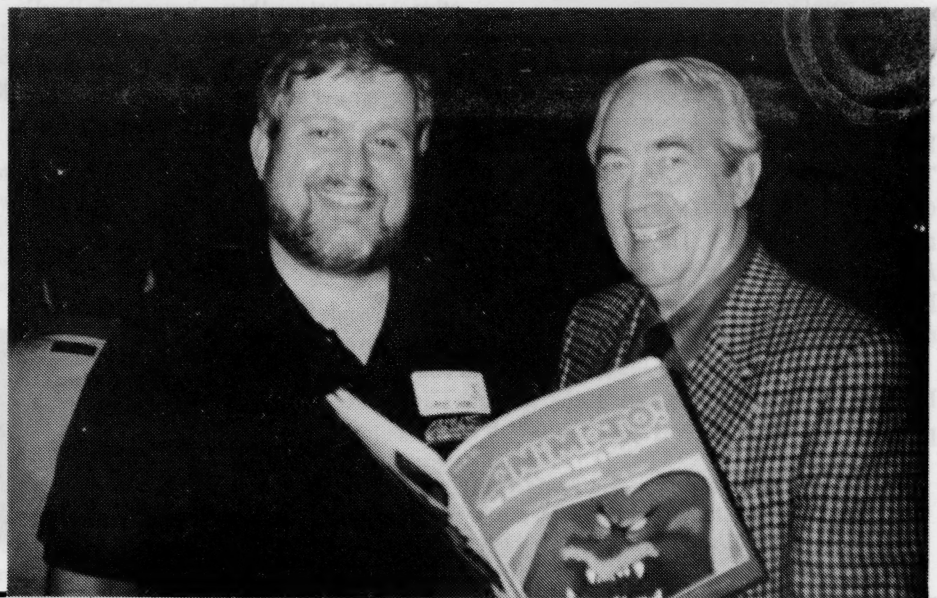
has had a long and very successful career as a movie producer (*Fiend Without a Face*, *The Haunted Strangler*, *The Cat and The Canary* and many more) and he exemplifies to me the importance of being your own person.

Myron Waldman and I have been friends for the better part of 20 years, and never would I have dreamed when I was a kid watching Fleischer cartoons on television that I would one day know one of the key figures at that studio. Myron could have easily settled for his success in animation, but he created a wonderful "novel without words," illustrated a praised comic strip and much more. He has always pushed himself into doing something new and different, a great lesson for anyone.

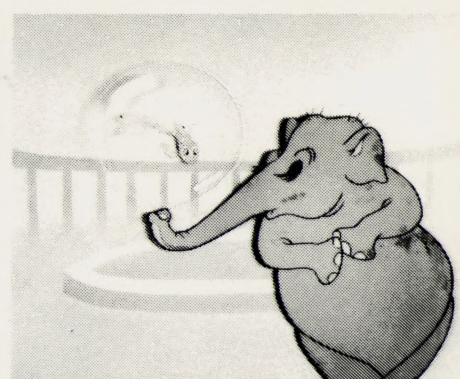
So, in this era of many people pointing their fingers at something other than themselves to explain the "reasons" for anti-social behavior and incorrect thought, I proudly say that movies and cartoons have had a wonderful influence on my life.

Thanks, guys!

I truly enjoyed my solo trip to the last ChillerCon in beautiful Seacacus, NJ in April and I just want to tip the **ANIMATO!** baseball hat to Kevin Clement and his great staff, especially everyone's main man Shawn, for another great show. Here I am with a fine actor and gentleman James Karen who was a guest at the show. Pat and I will see you in October!

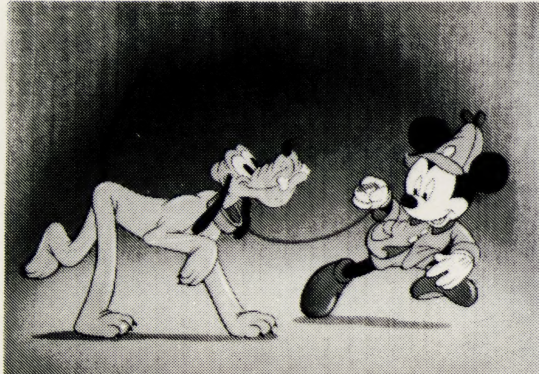


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